

















THE  
**R E D R O V E R,**  
**A T A L E.**

BY THE

AUTHOR OF THE PILOT, &c. &c.

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“Ye speak like honest men: pray God ye prove so!”

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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A NEW EDITION.

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Philadelphia:  
CAREY, LEA, & BLANCHARD.

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1836.



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Gift  
Florence W. Conger  
October 1, 1942

*Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit :*

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\* L. S. \*  
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BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the first day of November, in the fifty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1827, CAREY, LEA & CAREY, of the said district, have deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit :

"The Red Rover, a Tale. By the author of the Pilot, &c. &c."

"Ye speak like honest men: pray God ye prove so!"

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned." And also to the Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL, Clerk of the  
*Eastern District of Pennsylvania.*



TO

**W. B. SHUBRICK, ESQUIRE,**

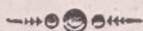
**U. S. NAVY.**

IN submitting this hastily-composed and imperfect picture of a few scenes, peculiar to the profession, to your notice, dear SHUBRICK, I trust much more to your kind feelings than to any merit in the execution. Such as it may be, however, the book is offered as another tribute to the constant esteem and friendship of

**THE AUTHOR.**



## PREFACE.



THE Writer felt it necessary, on a former occasion, to state, that, in sketching his marine life, he did not deem himself obliged to adhere, very closely, to the chronological order of nautical improvements. It is believed that no very great violation of dates will be found in the following pages. If any keen-eyed critic of the ocean, however, should happen to detect a rope rove through the wrong leading-block, or a term spelt in such a manner as to destroy its true sound, he is admonished of the duty of ascribing the circumstances, in charity, to any thing but ignorance on the part of a brother. It must be remembered that there is an undue proportion of landmen employed in the mechanical as well as the more spiritual part of book-making; a fact which, in itself, accounts for the numberless imperfections that still embarrass the respective departments of the occupation. In due time, no doubt, a remedy will be found for this crying evil; and then the world may hope to see the several branches of the trade a little better ordered. The true Augustan age of literature can never exist until works shall be as accurate, in their typography, as a "log book," and as sententious, in their matter, as a "watch-bill."

On the less important point of the materials, which are very possibly used to so little advantage in his present effort, the Writer does not intend to be very communicative. If their truth be not apparent, by the manner in which he has set forth the events in the tale itself, he must be content to lie under the imputation of having disfigured it, by his own clumsiness. All testimony must, in the nature of things, resolve itself into three great classes—the positive, the negative, and the circumstantial. The first and the last are universally admitted to be entitled to the most consideration; since the third can only be resorted to in the absence of the two others. Of the positive evidence of the verity of its contents, the book itself is a striking proof. It is hoped, also, that there is no want of circumstance to support this desirable character. If these two opening points be admitted, those who may be still disposed to cavil are left to the full enjoyment of their negation, with which the Writer wishes them just as much success as the question may merit.



# THE RED ROVER.

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## CHAPTER I.

PAR. "Mars dote on you for his novices."  
*All's Well that ends Well.*

No one, who is familiar with the bustle and activity of an American commercial town, would recognize, in the repose which now reigns in the ancient mart of Rhode Island, a place that, in its day, has been ranked amongst the most important ports along the whole line of our extended coast. It would seem, at the first glance, that nature had expressly fashioned the spot to anticipate the wants and to realize the wishes of the mariner. Enjoying the four great requisites of a safe and commodious haven, a placid basin, an outer harbour, and a convenient roadstead, with a clear offing, Newport appeared, to the eyes of our European ancestors, designed to shelter fleets and to nurse a race of hardy and expert seamen. Though the latter anticipation has not been entirely disappointed, how little has reality answered to expectation in respect to the former. A successful rival has arisen, even in the immediate vicinity of this seeming favourite of nature, to defeat all the calculations of mercantile sagacity, and to add another to the thousand existing evidences "that the wisdom of man is foolishness."

There are few towns of any magnitude, within our broad territories, in which so little change has been effected in half a century as in Newport. Until the vast resources of the interior were developed,



the beautiful island on which it stands was a chosen retreat of the affluent planters of the south, from the heats and diseases of their burning climate. Here they resorted in crowds, to breathe the invigorating breezes of the sea. Subjects of the same government, the inhabitants of the Carolinas and of Jamaica met here, in amity, to compare their respective habits and policies, and to strengthen each other in a common delusion, which the descendants of both, in the third generation, are beginning to perceive and to regret.

The communion left, on the simple and unpractised offspring of the Puritans, its impression both of good and evil. The inhabitants of the country, while they derived, from the intercourse, a portion of that bland and graceful courtesy for which the gentry of the southern British colonies were so distinguished, did not fail to imbibe some of those peculiar notions, concerning the distinctions in the races of men, for which they are no less remarkable. Rhode Island was the foremost among the New-England provinces to recede from the manners and opinions of their simple ancestors. The first shock was given, through her, to that rigid and ungracious deportment which was once believed a necessary concomitant of true religion, a sort of outward pledge of the healthful condition of the inward man; and it was also through her that the first palpable departure was made from those purifying principles which might serve as an apology for even far more repulsive exteriors. By a singular combination of circumstances and qualities, which is, however, no less true than perplexing, the merchants of Newport were becoming, at the same time, both slave-dealers and gentlemen.

Whatever might have been the moral condition of its proprietors at the precise period of 1759, the island itself was never more enticing and lovely. Its



swelling crests were still crowned with the wood of centuries; its little vales were then covered with the living verdure of the north; and its unpretending, but neat and comfortable villas lay sheltered in groves, and embedded in flowers. The beauty and fertility of the place gained for it a name which, probably, expressed far more than was, at that early day, properly understood. The inhabitants of the country styled their possessions the "Garden of America." Neither were their guests, from the scorching plains of the south, reluctant to concede so imposing a title to distinction. The appellation descended even to our own time; nor was it entirely abandoned, until the traveller had the means of contemplating the thousand broad and lovely vallies which, fifty years ago, lay buried in the dense shadows of the forest.

The date we have just named was a period fraught with the deepest interest to the British possessions on this Continent. A bloody and vindictive war, which had been commenced in defeat and disgrace, was about to end in triumph. France was deprived of the last of her possessions on the main, while the immense region which lay between the bay of Hudson and the territories of Spain submitted to the power of England. The colonists had shared largely in contributing to the success of the mother country. Losses and contumely, that had been incurred by the besotting prejudices of European commanders were beginning to be forgotten in the pride of success. The blunders of Braddock, the indolence of Loudon, and the impotency of Abercrombie, were repaired by the vigour of Amherst, and the genius of Wolfe. In every quarter of the globe the arms of Britain were triumphant. The loyal provincials were among the loudest in their exultations and rejoicings; wilfully shutting their eyes to the scanty meed of applause that a powerful people ever re-



luctantly bestows on its dependants, as though love of glory, like avarice, increases by its means of indulgence.

The system of oppression and misrule, which hastened a separation that sooner or later must have occurred, had not yet commenced. The mother country, if not just, was still complaisant. Like all old and great nations, she was indulging in the pleasing, but dangerous, enjoyment of self-contemplation. The qualities and services of a race, who were believed to be inferior, were, however, soon forgotten; or, if remembered, it was in order to be misrepresented and vituperated. As this feeling increased with the discontent of the civil dissensions, it led to still more striking injustice, and greater folly. Men who, from their observations, should have known better, were not ashamed to proclaim, even in the highest council of the nation, their ignorance of the character of a people with whom they had mingled their blood. Self-esteem gave value to the opinions of fools. It was under this soothing infatuation that veterans were heard to disgrace their noble profession, by boastings that should have been hushed in the mouth of a soldier of the carpet; it was under this infatuation that Burgoyne gave, in the Commons of England, that memorable promise of marching from Quebec to Boston, with a force he saw fit to name—a pledge that he afterwards redeemed, by going over the same ground, with twice the number of followers, as captives; and it was under this infatuation that England subsequently threw away her hundred thousand lives, and lavished her hundred millions of treasure.

The history of that memorable struggle is familiar to every American. Content with the knowledge that his country triumphed, he is willing to let the glorious result take its proper place in the pages of history. He sees that her empire rests on a broad



and natural foundation, which needs no support from venal pens ; and, happily for his peace of mind, no less than for his character, he feels that the prosperity of the Republic is not to be sought in the degradation of surrounding nations.

Our present purpose leads us back to the period of calm which preceded the storm of the Revolution. In the early days of the month of October 1759, Newport, like every other town in America, was filled with the mingled sentiment of grief and joy. The inhabitants mourned the fall of Wolfe, while they triumphed in his victory. Quebec, the strong-hold of the Canadas, and the last place of any importance held by a people whom they had been educated to believe were their natural enemies, had just changed its masters. That loyalty to the Crown of England, which endured so much before the strange principle became extinct, was then at its height ; and probably the colonist was not to be found who did not, in some measure, identify his own honour with the fancied glory of the head of the house of Brunswick. The day on which the action of our tale commences had been expressly set apart to manifest the sympathy of the good people of the town, and its vicinity, in the success of the royal arms. It had opened, as thousands of days have opened since, with the ringing of bells and the firing of cannon ; and the population had, at an early hour, poured into the streets of the place, with that determined zeal in the cause of merriment, which ordinarily makes preconcerted joy so dull an amusement. The chosen orator of the day had exhibited his eloquence, in a sort of prosaic monody in praise of the dead hero, and had sufficiently manifested his loyalty, by laying the glory, not only of that sacrifice, but all that had been reaped by so many thousands of his brave companions also, most humbly at the foot of the throne.



Content with these demonstrations of their allegiance, the inhabitants began to retire to their dwellings, as the sun settled towards those immense regions which then lay an endless and unexplored wilderness, but which now are teeming with the fruits and enjoyments of civilized life. The countrymen from the environs, and even from the adjoining main, were beginning to turn their faces towards their distant homes, with that frugal care which still distinguishes the inhabitants of the country even in the midst of their greatest abandonment to pleasures, in order that 'the approaching evening might not lead them into expenditures which were not deemed germane to the proper feelings of the occasion. In short, the excess of the hour was past, and each individual was returning into the sober channels of his ordinary avocations, with an earnestness and discretion which proved he was not altogether unmindful of the time that had been squandered in the display of a spirit that he already appeared half disposed to consider a little supererogatory.

The sounds of the hammer, the axe, and the saw were again heard in the place; the windows of more than one shop were half opened, as if its owner had made a sort of compromise between his interests and his conscience; and the masters of the only three inns in the town were to be seen standing before their doors, regarding the retiring countrymen with eyes that plainly betrayed they were seeking customers among a people who were always much more ready to sell than to buy. A few noisy and thoughtless seamen, belonging to the vessels in the haven, together with some half dozen notorious tavern-hunters, were, however, the sole fruits of all their nods of recognition, inquiries into the welfare of wives and children, and, in some instances, of open invitations to alight and drink.

Worldly care, with a constant, though sometimes



an oblique, look at the future state, formed the great characteristic of all that people who then dwelt in what were called the provinces of New-England. The business of the day, however, was not forgotten, though it was deemed unnecessary to digest its proceedings in idleness, or over the bottle. The travellers along the different roads that led into the interior of the island formed themselves into little knots, in which the policy of the great national events they had just been commemorating, and the manner they had been treated by the different individuals selected to take the lead in the offices of the day, were freely handled, though still with great deference to the established reputations of the distinguished parties most concerned. It was every where conceded, that the prayers, which had been in truth a little conversational and historical, were faultless and searching exercises; and, on the whole, (though to this opinion there were some clients of an advocate adverse to the orator, who were moderate dissenters) it was established, that a more eloquent oration had never issued from the mouth of man, than had that day been delivered in their presence. Precisely in the same temper was the subject discussed by the workmen on a ship, which was then building in the harbour, and which, in the same spirit of provincial admiration that has since immortalized so many edifices, bridges, and even individuals, within their several precincts, was confidently affirmed to be the rarest specimen then extant of the nice proportions of naval architecture!

Of the orator himself it may be necessary to say a word, in order that so remarkable an intellectual prodigy should fill his proper place in our frail and short-lived catalogue of the worthies of that day. He was the usual oracle of his neighbourhood, when a condensation of its ideas on any great event, like



the one just mentioned, became necessary. His learning was justly computed, by comparison, to be of the most profound and erudite character; and it was very truly affirmed to have astonished more than one European scholar, who had been tempted, by a fame which, like heat, was only the more intense from its being so confined, to grapple with him on the arena of ancient literature. He was a man who knew how to improve these high gifts to his exclusive advantage. In but one instance had he ever been thrown enough off his guard to commit an act that had a tendency to depress the reputation he had gained in this manner; and that was, in permitting one of his laboured flights of eloquence to be printed; or, as his more witty though less successful rival, the only other lawyer in the place, expressed it, in suffering one of his *fugitive* essays to be *caught*. But even this experiment, whatever might have been its effects abroad, served to confirm his renown at home. He now stood before his admirers in all the dignity of types; and it was in vain for that miserable tribe of “animalculæ, who live by feeding on the body of genius,” to attempt to undermine a reputation that was embalmed in the faith of so many parishes. The brochure was diligently scattered through the provinces, lauded around the tea-pot, openly extolled in the prints—by some kindred spirit, as was manifest in the striking similarity of style—and by one believer, more zealous or perhaps more interested than the rest, actually put on board the next ship which sailed for “home,” as England was then affectionately termed, enclosed in an envelope which bore an address no less imposing than the Majesty of Britian. Its effect on the straight-going mind of the dogmatic German, who then filled the throne of the Conqueror, was never known, though they, who were in the secret of the trans-



mission, long looked, in vain, for the signal reward that was to follow so striking an exhibition of human intellect.

Notwithstanding these high and beneficent gifts, their possessor was now as unconsciously engaged in that portion of his professional labours which bore the strongest resemblance to the occupation of a scrivener, as though nature, in bestowing such rare endowments, had denied him the phrenological quality of self-esteem. A critical observer might, however, have seen, or fancied that he saw, in the forced humility of his countenance, certain gleamings of a triumph that should not properly be traced to the fall of Quebec. The habit of appearing meek had, however, united with a frugal regard for the precious and irreclaimable minutes, in producing this extraordinary diligence in a pursuit of a character that was so humble, when compared with his recent mental efforts.

Leaving this gifted favourite of fortune and nature, we shall pass to an entirely different individual, and to another quarter of the place. The spot, to which we wish now to transport the reader, was neither more nor less than the shop of a tailor, who did not disdain to perform the most minute offices of his vocation, in his own heedful person. The humble edifice stood at no great distance from the water, in the skirts of the town, and in such a situation as to enable its occupant to look out upon the loveliness of the inner basin, and, through a vista cut by the element between islands, even upon the lake-like scenery of the outer harbour. A small, though little frequented wharf lay before his door, while a certain air of negligence, and the absence of bustle, sufficiently manifested that the place itself was not the immediate site of the much-boasted commercial prosperity of the port.

The afternoon was like a morning in spring, the



breeze which occasionally rippled the basin possessing that peculiarly bland influence which is so often felt in the American autumn; and the worthy mechanic laboured at his calling, seated on his shop-board, at an open window, far better satisfied with himself than many of those whose fortune it is to be placed in state, beneath canopies of velvet and gold. On the outer side of the little building, a tall, awkward, but vigorous and well-formed countryman was lounging, with one shoulder placed against the side of the shop, as if his legs found the task of supporting his heavy frame too grievous to be endured without assistance, seemingly in waiting for the completion of the garment at which the other toiled, and with which he intended to adorn the graces of his person, in an adjoining parish, on the succeeding sabbath.

In order to render the minutes shorter, and, possibly, in indulgence to a powerful propensity to talk, of which he who wielded the needle was somewhat the subject, but few of the passing moments were suffered to escape without a word from one or the other of the parties. As the subject of their discourse had a direct reference to the principal matter of our tale, we shall take leave to give such portions of it to the reader as we deem most relevant to a clear exposition of that which is to follow. The latter will always bear in mind, that he who worked was a man drawing into the wane of life; that he bore about him the appearance of one who, either from incompetency or from some fatality of fortune, had been doomed to struggle through the world, keeping poverty from his residence only by the aid of great industry and rigid frugality; and that the idler was a youth of an age and condition that the acquisition of an entire set of habiliments formed to him a sort of era in his adventures.

“Yes,” exclaimed the indefatigable shaper of



cloth, with a species of sigh which might have been equally construed into an evidence of the fulness of his mental enjoyment, or of the excess of his bodily labours; "yes, smarter sayings have seldom fallen from the lips of man, than such as the squire pour'd out this very day. When he spoke of the plains of father Abraham, and of the smoke and thunder of the battle, Pardon, it stirred up such stomachy feelings in my bosom, that I verily believe I could have had the heart to throw aside the thimble, and go forth myself, to seek glory in battling in the cause of the King."

The youth, whose Christian or 'given' name, as it is even now generally termed in New-England, had been intended, by his pious sponsors, humbly to express his future hopes, turned his head towards the heroic tailor, with an expression of drollery about the eye, that proved nature had not been niggardly in the gift of humour, however the quality was suppressed by the restraints of a very peculiar manner, and no less peculiar education.

"There's an opening now, neighbour Homespun, for an ambitious man," he said, "sin' his Majesty has lost his stoutest general."

"Yes, yes," returned the individual who, either in his youth or in his age, had made so capital a blunder in the choice of a profession, "a fine and promising chance it is for one who counts but five-and-twenty; most of my day has gone by, and I must spend the rest of it here, where you see me, between buckram and osnaburghs—who put the dye into your cloth, Pardy? it is the best laid-in bark I've fingered this fall."

"Let the old woman alone for giving the lasting colour to her web; I'll engage, neighbour Homespun, provided you furnish the proper fit, there'll not be a better dress'd lad on the island than my own mother's son! But, sin' you cannot be a general



good-man, you'll have the comfort of knowing there'll be no more fighting without you. Every body agrees the French won't hold out much longer, and then we must have a peace for want of enemies."

"So best, so best, boy; for one, who has seen so much of the horrors of war as I, knows how to put a rational value on the blessings of tranquillity!"

"Then you ar'n't altogether unacquainted, good-man, with the new trade you thought of setting up?"

"I! I have been through five long and bloody wars, and I've reason to thank God that I've gone through them all without a scratch so big as this needle would make. Five long and bloody, ay, and I may say glorious wars, have I liv'd through in safety!"

"A perilous time it must have been for you, neighbour. But I don't remember to have heard of more than two quarrels with the Frenchmen in my day."

"You are but a boy, compared to one who has seen the end of his third score of years. Here is this war that is now so likely to be soon ended—Heaven, which rules all things in wisdom, be praised for the same! Then there was the business of '45, when the bold Warren sailed up and down our coasts; a scourge to his Majesty's enemies, and a safeguard to all the loyal subjects. Then, there was a business in Garmany, concerning which we had awful accounts of battles fou't, in which men were mowed down like grass falling before the scythe of a strong arm. That makes three. The fourth was the rebellion of '15, of which I pretend not to have seen much, being but a youth at the time; and the fifth was a dreadful rumour, that was spread through the provinces, of a general rising among the blacks and Indians, which was to sweep all us Christians into eternity at a minute's warning!"

"Well, I had always reckoned you for a home-staying and a peaceable man, neighbour;" returned



the admiring countryman; "nor did I ever dream that you had seen such serious movings."

"I have not boasted, Pardon, or I might have added other heavy matters to the list. There was a great struggle in the East, no longer than the year '32, for the Persian throne. You have read of the laws of the Medes and the Persians: Well, for the very throne that gave forth those unalterable laws was there a frightful struggle, in which blood ran like water; but, as it was not in Christendom, I do not account it among my own experiences; though I might have spoken of the Porteous mob with great reason, as it took place in another portion of the very kingdom in which I lived."

"You must have journeyed much, and been stirring late and early, good-man, to have seen all these things, and to have got no harm."

"Yes, yes, I've been something of a traveller too, Pardy. Twice have I been over land to Boston, and once have I sailed through the Great Sound of Long Island, down to the town of York. It is an awful undertaking the latter, as it respects the distance, and more especially because it is needful to pass a place that is likened, by its name, to the entrance of 'Tophet.'"

"I have often heard the spot call'd 'Hell Gate' spoken of, and I may say, too, that I know a man *well* who has been through it twice; once in going to York, and once in coming homeward."

"He had enough of it, as I'll engage! Did he tell you of the pot which tosses and roars as if the biggest of Beelzebub's fires was burning beneath, and of the hog's-back over which the water pitches, as it may tumble over the Great Falls of the West! Owing to reasonable skill in our seamen, and uncommon resolution in the passengers, we happily made a good time of it, through ourselves; though, I care not who knows it, I will own it is a severe trial



to the courage to enter that same dreadful Strait. We cast out our anchors at certain islands, which lie a few furlongs this side the place, and sent the pinnacle, with the captain and two stout seamen, to reconnoitre the spot, in order to see if it were in a peaceful state or not. The report being favourable, the passengers were landed, and the vessel was got through, by the blessing of Heaven, in safety. We had all reason to rejoice that the prayers of the congregation were asked before we departed from the peace and security of our homes !”

“ You journeyed round the ‘ Gate ’ on foot ? ”—demanded the attentive boor.

“ Certain ! It would have been a sinful and a blasphemous tempting of Providence to have done otherwise, seeing that our duty called us to no such sacrifice. But all that danger is gone by, and so I trust will that of this bloody war, in which we have both been actors ; and then I humbly hope his sacred Majesty will have leisure to turn his royal mind to the pirates who infest the coast, and to order some of his stout naval captains to mete out to the rogues the treatment they are so fond of giving unto others. It would be a joyful sight to my old eyes to see the famous and long-hunted Red Rover brought into this very port, towing at the poop of a King’s cruiser.”

“ And is it a desperate villain, he of whom you now make mention ? ”

“ He ! There are many he’s in that one lawless ship, and bloody-minded and nefarious thieves are they, to the smallest boy. It is heart-searching and grievous, Pardy, to hear of their evil-doings on the high seas of the King ! ”

“ I have often heard mention made of the Rover,” returned the countryman ; “ but never to enter into any of the intricate particulars of his knavery.”

“ How should you, boy, who live up in the country, know so much of what is passing on the great deep,



as we who dwell in a port that is so much resorted to by mariners! I am fearful you'll be making it late home, Pardon," he added, glancing his eye at certain lines drawn on his shop-board, by the aid of which he was enabled to note the progress of the setting sun. "It is drawing towards the hour of five, and you have twice that number of miles to go, before you can, by any manner of means, reach the nearest boundary of your father's farm."

"The road is plain, and the people honest," returned the countryman, who cared not if it were midnight, provided he could be the bearer of tidings of some dreadful sea robbery to the ears of those whom he well knew would throng around him, at his return, to hear the tidings from the port. "And is he, in truth, so much feared and sought for, as people say?"

"Is he sought for! Is Tophet sought by a praying Christian? Few there are on the mighty deep, let them even be as stout for battle as was Joshua the great Jewish captain, that would not rather behold the land than see the top-gallants of that wicked pirate! Men fight for glory, Pardon, as I may say I have seen, after living through so many wars, but none love to meet an enemy who hoists a bloody flag at the first blow, and who is ready to cast both parties into the air, when he finds the hand of Satan has no longer power to help him."

"If the rogue is so desperate," returned the youth straightening his powerful limbs, with a look of rising pride, "why do not the Island and the Plantations fit out a coaster in order to bring him in, that he might get a sight of a wholesome gibbet? Let the drum beat on such a message through our neighbourhood, and I'll engage that it don't leave it without one volunteer at least."

"So much for not having seen war! Of what use would flails and pitch-forks prove against men who



have sold themselves to the devil? Often has the Rover been seen at night, or just as the sun has been going down, by the King's cruisers, who, having fairly surrounded the thieves, had good reason to believe that they had them already in the bilboes; but, when the morning has come, the prize was vanished, by fair means or by foul!"

"And are the villains so bloody-minded that they are called 'Red?'"

"Such is the title of their leader," returned the worthy tailor, who by this time was swelling with the importance of possessing so interesting a legend to communicate; "and such is also the name they give to his vessel; because no man, who has put foot on board her, has ever come back to say that she has a better or a worse; that is, no honest mariner or lucky voyager. ~~The ship~~ is of the size of a King's sloop, they say, and of like equipments and form; but she has miraculously escaped from the hands of many a gallant frigate; and once, it is whispered, for no loyal subject would like to say such a scandalous thing openly, Pardon, that she lay under the guns of a fifty for an hour, and seemingly, to all eyes, she sunk like hammered lead to the bottom. But, just as every body was shaking hands, and wishing his neighbour joy at so happy a punishment coming over the knaves, a West-Indiaman came into port, that had been robbed by the Rover on the morning after the night in which it was thought they had all gone into eternity together. And what makes the matter worse, boy, while the King's ship was careening with her keel out, to stop the holes of cannon balls, the pirate was sailing up and down the coast, as sound as the day that the wrights first turned her from their hands!"

"Well, this is unheard of!" returned the countryman, on whom the tale was beginning to make a sensible impression: "Is she a well-turned and come-



ly ship to the eye? or is it by any means certain that she is an actual living vessel at all?"

"Opinions differ. Some say, yes; some say, no. But I am well acquainted with a man who travelled a week in company with a mariner, who passed within a hundred feet of her, in a gale of wind. Lucky it was for them, that the hand of the Lord was felt so powerfully on the deep, and that the Rover had enough to do to keep his own ship from foundering. The acquaintance of my friend had a good view of both vessel and captain, therefore, in perfect safety. He said, that the pirate was a man may-be half as big again as the tall preacher over on the main, with hair of the colour of the sun in a fog, and eyes that no man would like to look upon a second time. He saw him as plainly as I see you; for the knave stood in the rigging of his ship, beckoning, with a hand as big as a coat-flap, for the honest trader to keep off, in order that the two vessels might not do one another damage by coming foul."

"He was a bold mariner, that trader, to go so nigh such a merciless rogue."

"I warrant you, Pardon, it was desperately against his will! But it was on a night so dark—"

"Dark!" interrupted the other; by what contrivance then did he manage to see so well?"

"No man can say!" answered the tailor, "but see he did, just in the manner, and the very things I have named to you. More than that, he took good note of the vessel, that he might know her, if chance, or Providence, should ever happen to throw her again into his way. She was a long, black ship, lying low in the water, like a snake in the grass, with a desperate wicked look, and altogether of dishonest dimensions. Then, every body says that she appears to sail faster than the clouds above, seeming to care little which way the wind blows, and that no one is a jot safer from her speed than her honesty. Ac-



according to all that I have heard, she is something such a craft as yonder slaver, that has been lying the week past, the Lord knows why, in our outer harbour."

As the gossiping tailor had necessarily lost many precious moments, in relating the preceding history, he now set about redeeming them with the utmost diligence, keeping time to the rapid movement of his needle-hand, by corresponding jerks of his head and shoulders. In the meanwhile, the bumpkin, whose wondering mind was by this time charged nearly to bursting with what he had heard, turned his look towards the vessel the other had pointed out, in order to get the only image that was now required, to enable him to do fitting credit to so moving a tale, suitably engraved on his imagination. There was necessarily a pause, while the respective parties were thus severally occupied. It was suddenly broken by the tailor, who clipped the thread with which he had just finished the garment, cast every thing from his hands, threw his spectacles upon his forehead, and, leaning his arms on his kness in such a manner as to form a perfect labyrinth with the limbs, he stretched his body forward so far as to lean out of the window, riveting his eyes also on the ship, which still attracted the gaze of his companion.

"Do you know, Pardy," he said, "that strange thoughts and cruel misgivings have come over me concerning that very vessel? They say she is a slaver come in for wood and water, and there she has been a week, and not a stick bigger than an oar has gone up her side, and I'll engage that ten drops from Jamaica have gone on board her, to one from the spring. Then you may see she is anchored in such a way that but one of the guns from the battery can touch her; whereas, had she been a real timid trader, she would naturally have got into a place where, if a straggling picaroon should come



into the port, he would have found her in the very hottest of the fire."

"You have an ingenious turn with you, good-man," returned the wondering countryman; "now, a ship might have lain on the battery island itself, and I would have hardly noticed the thing."

"'Tis use and experience, Pardon, that makes men of us all. I should know something of batteries, having seen so many wars, and I served a campaign of a week, in that very fort, when the rumour came that the French were sending cruisers from Louis-burg down the coast. For that matter, my duty was to stand sentinel over that very cannon; and, if I have done the thing once, I have twenty times squinted along the piece, to see in what quarter it would send its shot, provided such a calamity should arrive as that it might become necessary to fire it, loaded with real warlike balls."

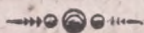
"And who are these?" demanded Pardon, with that species of sluggish curiosity which had been awakened by the wonders related by the other: "Are these mariners of the slaver, or are they idle Newporters?"

"Them!" exclaimed the tailor; "sure enough, they are new-comers, and it may be well to have a closer look at them in these troublesome times! Here, Nab, take the garment, and press down the seams, you idle hussy; for neighbour Hopkins is straitened for time, while your tongue is going like a young lawyer's in a justice court. Don't be sparing of your elbow, girl; for it's no India muslin that you'll have under the iron, but cloth that would do to side a house with. Ah! your mother's loom, Pardy, robs the seamster of many an honest job."

Having thus transferred the remainder of the job from his own hands to those of an awkward, pouting girl, who was compelled to abandon her gossip with a neighbour, in order to obey his injunctions, he



quickly removed his own person, notwithstanding a miserable limp with which he had come into the world, from the shop-board to the open air. As more important characters are, however, about to be introduced to the reader, we shall defer the ceremony to the opening of another chapter.



## CHAPTER II.

SIR TOBY. "Excellent ! I smell a device."  
*Twelfth Night.*

THE strangers were three in number ; for strangers the good-man Homespun, who knew not only the names but most of the private history of every man and woman within ten miles of his own residence, immediately proclaimed them to be, in a whisper to his companion ; and strangers, too, of a mysterious and threatening aspect. In order that others may have an opportunity of judging of the probability of the latter conjecture, it becomes necessary that a more minute account should be given of the respective appearances of these individuals, who, unhappily for their reputations, had the misfortune to be unknown to the gossiping tailor of Newport.

The one, by far the most imposing in his general mien, was a youth who had apparently seen some six or seven-and-twenty seasons. That those seasons had not been entirely made of sunny days, and nights of repose, was betrayed by the tinges of brown which had been laid on his features, layer after layer, in such constant succession, as to have changed, to a deep olive, a complexion which had once been fair, and through which the rich blood was still mantling with the finest glow of vigorous health. His features were rather noble and manly, than distin-



guished for their exactness and symmetry ; his nose being far more bold and prominent than regular in its form, with his brows projecting, and sufficiently marked to give to the whole of the superior parts of his face that decided intellectual expression which is already becoming so common to American physiognomy. The mouth was firm and manly ; and, while he muttered to himself, with a meaning smile, as the curious tailor drew slowly nigher, it discovered a set of glittering teeth, that shone the brighter from being cased in so dark a setting. The hair was a jet black, in thick and confused ringlets ; the eyes were very little larger than common, gray, and, though evidently of a changing expression, rather leaning to mildness than severity. The form of this young man was of that happy size which so singularly unites activity with strength. It seemed to be well knit, while it was justly proportioned, and strikingly graceful. Though these several personal qualifications were exhibited under the disadvantages of the perfectly simple, though neat and rather tastefully disposed, attire of a common mariner, they were sufficiently imposing to cause the suspicious dealer in buckram to hesitate before he would venture to address the stranger, whose eye appeared riveted, by a species of fascination, on the reputed slaver in the outer harbour. A curl of the upper lip, and another strange smile, in which scorn was mingled with his mutterings, decided the vacillating mind of the good-man. Without venturing to disturb a reverie that seemed so profound, he left the youth leaning against the head of the pile where he had long been standing, perfectly unconscious of the presence of any intruder, and turned a little hastily to examine the rest of the party.

One of the remaining two was a white man, and the other a negro. Both had passed the middle age ; and both, in their appearances, furnished the strong-



est proofs of long exposure to the severity of climate, and to numberless tempests. They were dressed in the plain, weather-soiled, and tarred habiliments of common seamen, and bore about their several persons all the other unerring evidences of their peculiar profession. The former was of a short, thick-set, powerful frame, in which, by a happy ordering of nature, a little confirmed perhaps by long habit, the strength was principally seated about the broad and brawny shoulders, and strong sinewy arms, as if, in the construction of the man, the inferior members had been considered of little other use than to transfer the superior to the different situations in which the former were to display their energies. His head was in proportion to the more immediate members; the forehead low, and nearly covered with hair; the eyes small, obstinate, sometimes fierce, and often dull; the nose snub, coarse, and vulgar; the mouth large and voracious; the teeth short, clean, and perfectly sound; and the chin broad, manly, and even expressive. This singularly constructed personage had taken his seat on an empty barrel, and, with folded arms, he sat examining the often-mentioned slaver, occasionally favouring his companion, the black, with such remarks as were suggested by his observation and great experience.

The negro occupied a more humble post; one better suited to his subdued habits and inclinations. In stature, and the peculiar division of animal force, there was a great resemblance between the two, with the exception that the latter enjoyed the advantage in height, and even in proportions. While nature had stamped on his lineaments those distinguishing marks which characterize the race from which he sprung, she had not done it to that revolting degree to which her displeasure against that stricken people is often carried. His features were more elevated than common; his eye was mild, easily excited to



joy, and, like that of his companion, sometimes humorous. His head was beginning to be sprinkled with gray, his skin had lost the shining jet colour which had distinguished it in his youth, and all his limbs and movements bespoke a man whose frame had been equally indurated and stiffened by unremitted toil. He sat on a low stone, and seemed intently employed in tossing pebbles into the air, and shewing his dexterity by catching them in the hand from which they had just been cast; an amusement which betrayed alike the natural tendency of his mind to seek pleasure in trifles, and the absence of those more elevating feelings which are the fruits of education. The process, however, furnished a striking exhibition of the physical force of the negro. In order to conduct this trivial pursuit without incumbrance, he had rolled the sleeve of his light canvas jacket to the elbow, and laid bare an arm that might have served as a model for the limb of Hercules.

There was certainly nothing sufficiently imposing about the persons of either of these individuals to repel the investigations of one as much influenced by curiosity as our tailor. Instead, however, of yielding directly to the strong impulse, the honest shaper of cloth chose to conduct his advance in a manner that should afford to the bumpkin a striking proof of his boasted sagacity. After making a sign of caution and intelligence to the latter, he approached slowly from behind, with a light step, that might give him an opportunity of overhearing any secret that should unwittingly fall from either of the seamen. His forethought was followed by no very important results, though it served to supply his suspicions with all the additional testimony of the treachery of their characters that could be furnished by evidence so simple as the mere sound of their voices. As to the words themselves, though the good-man believed they might well contain treason, he was



compelled to acknowledge to himself that it was so artfully concealed as to escape even his acute capacity. We leave the reader himself to judge of the correctness of both opinions.

"This is a pretty bight of a basin, Guinea," observed the white, rolling his tobacco in his mouth, and turning his eyes, for the first time in many minutes, from the vessel; "and a spot is it that a man, who lay on a lee-shore without sticks, might be glad to see his craft in. Now do I call myself something of a seaman, and yet I cannot weather upon the philosophy of that fellow, in keeping his ship in the outer harbour, when he might warp her into this mill-pond in half an hour. It gives his boats hard duty, dusky S'ip; and that I call making foul weather of fair!"

The negro had been christened Scipio Africanus, by a species of witticism which was much more common to the Provinces than it is to the States of America, and which filled so many of the meaner employments of the country, in name at least, with the counterparts of the philosophers, heroes, poets, and princes of Rome. To him it was a matter of small moment, whether the vessel lay in the offing or in the port; and, without discontinuing his childish amusement, he manifested the same, by replying, with great indifference of manner,—

"I s'pose he t'ink all the water inside lie on a top."

"I tell you, Guinea," returned the other, in a harsh, positive tone, "the fellow is a know-nothing! Would any man, who understands the behaviour of a ship, keep his craft in a roadstead, when he might tie her, head and stern, in a basin like this?"

"What he call roadstead?" interrupted the negro, seizing at once, with the avidity of ignorance, on the little oversight of his adversary, in confounding the outer harbour of Newport with the wilder anchorage



below, and with the usual indifference of all similar people to the more material matter of whether the objection was at all germane to the point in controversy; "I never hear 'em call anchoring ground, with land around it, roadstead afore!"

"Hark ye, mister Gold-coast," muttered the white, bending his head aside in a threatening manner, though he still disdained to turn his eyes on his humble adversary, "if you've no wish to wear your shins parcelled for the next month, gather in the slack of your wit, and have an eye to the manner in which you let it run again. Just tell me this; isn't a port a port? and isn't an offing an offing?"

As these were two propositions to which even the ingenuity of Scipio could raise no objection, he wisely declined touching on either, contenting himself with shaking his head in great self-complacency, and laughing as heartily, at his imaginary triumph over his companion, as though he had never known care, nor been the subject of wrong and humiliation, so long and so patiently endured.

"Ay, ay," grumbled the white, re-adjusting his person in its former composed attitude, and again crossing the arms, which had been a little separated, to give force to the menace against the tender member of the black, "now you are piping the wind out of your throat like a flock of long-shore crows, you think you've got the best of the matter. The Lord made a nigger an unrational animal; and an experienced seaman, who has doubled both Capes, and made all the head-lands atween Fundy and Horn, has no right to waste his breath in teaching any of the breed! I tell you, Scipio, since Scipio is your name on the ship's books, though I'll wager a month's pay against a wooden boat-hook that your father was known at home as Quashee, and your mother as Quasheeba—therefore do I tell you, Scipio Africa—which is a name for all your colour, I believe—that



yonder chap, in the outer harbour of this here sea port, is no judge of an anchorage, or he would drop a kedge mayhap hereaway, in a line with the southern end of that there small matter of an island, and, hauling his ship up to it, fasten her to the spot with good hempen cables and iron mud-hooks. Now, look you here, S'ip, at the reason of the matter," he continued, in a manner which shewed that the little skirmish that had just passed was like one of those sudden squalls of which they had both seen so many, and which were usually so soon succeeded by corresponding seasons of calm; "look you at the whole rationality of what I say. He has come into this anchorage either for something or for nothing. I suppose you are ready to admit that. If for nothing, he might have found that much outside, and I'll say no more about it; but if for something, he could get it off easier, provided the ship lay hereaway, just where I told you, boy, not a fathom ahead or astern, than where she is now riding, though the article was no heavier than a fresh handful of feathers for the captain's pillow. Now, if you have any thing to gainsay the reason of this, why, I'm ready to hear it as a reasonable man, and one who has not forgotten his manners in learning his philosophy."

"S'pose a wind come out fresh here, at nor-west," answered the other, stretching his brawny arm towards the point of the compass he named, "and a vessel want to get to sea in a hurry, how you t'ink he get her far enough up to lay through the weather reach? Ha! you answer me dat; you great scholar, misser Dick, but you never see ship go in wind's teeth, or hear a monkey talk."

"The black is right!" exclaimed the youth, who, it would seem, had overheard the dispute, while he appeared otherwise engaged; "the slaver has left his vessel in the outer harbour, knowing that the wind holds so much to the westward at this season



of the year; and then you see he keeps his light spars aloft, although it is plain enough, by the manner in which his sails are furled, that he is strong-handed. Can you make out, boys, whether he has an anchor under foot, or is he merely riding by a single cable?"

"The man must be a driveller, to lie in such a tides-way, without dropping his stream, or at least a kedge, to steady the ship," returned the white, without appearing to think any thing more than the received practice of seamen necessary to decide the point. "That he is no great judge of an anchorage, I am ready to allow; but no man, who can keep things so snug aloft, would think of fastening his ship, for any length of time, by a single cable, to sheer star-board and port, like that kicking colt, tied to the tree by a long halter, that we fell in with, in our passage over land from Boston."

"'Em got a stream down, and all a rest of he anchors stowed," said the black, whose dark eye was glancing understandingly at the vessel, while he still continued to cast his pebbles into the air: "S'pose he jam a helm hard a-port, misser Harry, and take a tide on he larboard bow, what you t'ink make him kick and gallop about! Golly! I like to see Dick, without a foot-rope, ride a colt tied to tree!"

Again the negro enjoyed his humour, by shaking his head, as if his whole soul was amused by the whimsical image his rude fancy had conjured, and indulged in a hearty laugh; and again his white companion muttered certain exceedingly heavy and sententious denunciations. The young man, who seemed to enter very little into the quarrels and witticisms of his singular associates, still kept his gaze intently fastened on the vessel, which to him appeared, for the moment, to be the subject of some extraordinary interest. Shaking his own head, though in



a far graver manner, as if his doubts were drawing to a close, he added, as the boisterous merriment of the negro ceased,—

“Yes, Scipio, you are right: he rides altogether by his stream, and he keeps every thing in readiness for a sudden move. In ten minutes he would carry his ship beyond the fire of the battery, provided he had but a capful of wind.”

“You appear to be a judge in these matters,” said an unknown voice behind him.

The youth turned suddenly on his heel, and then, for the first time, was he apprised of the presence of any intruders. The surprise, however, was not confined to himself; for, as there was another newcomer to be added to the company, the gossiping tailor was quite as much, or even more, the subject of astonishment, than any of that party, whom he had been so intently watching as to have prevented him from observing the approach of still another utter stranger.

The third individual was a man between thirty and forty, and of a mien and attire not a little adapted to quicken the already active curiosity of the good-man Homespun. His person was slight, but afforded the promise of exceeding agility, and even of vigour, especially when contrasted with his stature, which was scarcely equal to the medium height of man. His skin had been dazzling as that of woman, though a deep red, which had taken possession of the lower lineaments of his face, and which was particularly conspicuous on the outline of a fine aquiline nose, served to destroy all appearance of effeminacy. His hair was like his complexion, fair, and fell about his temples in rich, glossy, and exuberant curls. His mouth and chin were beautiful in their formation; but the former was a little scornful, and the two together bore a decided character of voluptuousness. The eye was blue, full without



being prominent, and, though in common placid and even soft, there were moments when it seemed a little unsettled and wild. He wore a high conical hat, placed a little on one side, so as to give a slightly rakish expression to his physiognomy, a riding frock of light green, breeches of buck-skin, high boots, and spurs. In one of his hands he carried a small whip, with which, when first seen, he was cutting the air with an appearance of the utmost indifference to the surprise occasioned by his sudden interruption.

"I say, sir, you seem to be a judge in these matters," he repeated, when he had endured the frowning examination of the young seaman quite as long as comported with his own patience; "you speak like a man who feels he has a right to give an opinion!"

"Do you find it remarkable that one should not be ignorant of a profession that he has diligently pursued for a whole life?"

"Hum! I find it a little remarkable, that one, whose business is that of a handicraft, should dignify his trade with such a sounding name as *profession*. We of the learned science of the law, and who enjoy the particular smiles of the learned universities, can say no more!"

"Then call it trade; for nothing in common with gentlemen of your craft is acceptable to a seaman," retorted the young mariner, turning away from the intruder with a disgust that he did not affect to conceal.

"A lad of some metal!" muttered the other, with a rapid utterance and a meaning smile. "Let not such a trifle as a word part us, friend. I confess my ignorance of all maritime matters, and would gladly learn a little from one as skilful as yourself in the noble—*profession*. I think you said something concerning the manner in which yonder ship has an-



chored, and of the condition in which they keep things alow and aloft?"

"*Alow and aloft!*" exclaimed the young sailor, facing his interrogator with a stare that was quite as expressive as his recent disgust.

"*Alow and aloft!*" calmly repeated the other.

"I spoke of her neatness aloft, but do not affect to judge of things below at this distance."

"Then it was my error; but you will have pity on the ignorance of one who is so new to the *profession*. As I have intimated, I am no more than an unworthy barrister, in the service of his Majesty, expressly sent from home on a particular errand. If it were not a pitiful pun, I might add, I am not yet—a judge."

"No doubt you will soon arrive at that distinction," returned the other, "if his Majesty's ministers have any just conceptions of modest merit; unless, indeed, you should happen to be prematurely"——

The youth bit his lip, made a haughty inclination of the head, and walked leisurely up the wharf, followed, with the same appearance of deliberation, by the two seamen who had accompanied him in his visit to the place. The stranger in green watched the whole movement with a calm and apparently an amused eye, tapping his boot with his whip, and seeming to reflect like one who would willingly find means to continue the discourse.

"Hanged!" he at length uttered, as if to complete the sentence the other had left unfinished. "It is droll enough that such a fellow should dare to foretel so elevated a fate for *me!*"

He was evidently preparing to follow the retiring party, when he felt a hand laid a little unceremoniously on his arm, and his step was arrested.

"One word in your ear, sir," said the attentive tailor, making a significant sign that he had matters of importance to communicate: "A single word,



sir, since you are in the particular service of his Majesty. Neighbour Pardon," he continued, with a dignified and patronising air, "the sun is getting low, and you will make it late home, I fear. The girl will give you the garment, and—God speed you! Say nothing of what you have heard and seen, until you have word from me to that effect; for it is seemly that two men, who have had so much experience in a war like this, should not lack in discretion. Fare ye well, lad!—pass the good word to the worthy farmer, your father, not forgetting a refreshing hint of friendship to the thrifty housewife, your mother. Fare ye well, honest youth; fare ye well!"

Homespun, having thus disposed of his admiring companion, waited, with much elevation of mien, until the gaping bumpkin had left the wharf, before he again turned his look on the stranger in green. The latter had continued standing in his tracks, with an air of undisturbed composure, until he was once more addressed by the tailor, whose character and dimensions he seemed to have taken in, at a single glance of his rapid eye.

"You say, sir, you are a servant of his Majesty?" demanded the latter, determined to solve all doubts as to the other's claims on his confidence, before he committed himself by any precipitate disclosure.

"I may say more;—his familiar confident!"

"It is an honour to converse with such a man, that I feel in every bone in my body," returned the cripple, smoothing his scanty hairs, and bowing nearly to the earth; "a high and loyal honour do I feel this gracious privilege to be."

"Such as it is, my friend, I take on myself in his Majesty's name, to bid you welcome."

"Such munificent condescension would open my whole heart, though treason, and all other unrighteousness, was locked up in it. I am happy, honoured, and I doubt not, honourable sir, to have this op-



portunity of proving my zeal to the King, before one who will not fail to report my humble efforts to his royal ears."

"Speak freely," interrupted the stranger in green, with an air of princely condescension; though one, less simple and less occupied with his own budding honours than the tailor, might have easily discovered that he began to grow weary of the other's prolix loyalty: "Speak without reserve, friend; it is what we always do at court." Then, switching his boot with his riding whip, he muttered to himself, as he swung his light frame on his heel, with an indolent, indifferent air, "If the fellow swallows that, he is as stupid as his own goose!"

"I shall, sir, I shall; and a great proof of charity is it in one like your noble self to listen. You see yonder tall ship, sir, in the outer harbour of this loyal sea-port?"

"I do; she seems to be an object of general attention among the worthy lieges of the place."

"Therein I conceive, sir, you have overrated the sagacity of my townsmen. She has been lying where you now see her for many days, and not a syllable have I heard whispered against her character from mortal man. except myself."

"Indeed!" muttered the stranger, biting the handle of his whip, and fastening his glittering eyes intently on the features of the good-man, which were literally swelling with the importance of his discovery; "and what may be the nature of *your* suspicions?"

"Why, sir, I may be wrong—and God forgive me if I am—but this is no more nor less than what has arisen in my mind on the subject. Yonder ship, and her crew, bear the reputation of being innocent and harmless slavers, among the good people of Newport; and as such are they received and welcomed in the place, the one to a safe and easy anchorage, and the



others among the taverners and shop-dealers. I would not have you imagine that a single garment has ever gone from my fingers for one of all her crew; no, let it be for ever remembered that the whole of their dealings have been with the young tradesman named Tape, who entices customers to barter, by backbiting and otherwise defiling the fair names of his betters in the business: not a garment has been made by my hands for even the smallest boy."

"You are lucky," returned the stranger in green, "in being so well quit of the knaves! and yet have you forgotten to name the particular offence with which I am to charge them before the face of the King."

"I am coming as fast as possible to the weighty matter. You must know, worthy and commendable sir, that I am a man that has seen much, and suffered much, in his Majesty's service. Five bloody and cruel wars have I gone through, besides other adventures and experiences, such as becomes a humble subject to suffer meekly and in silence."

"All of which shall be directly communicated to the royal ear. And now, worthy friend, relieve your mind, by a frank communication of your suspicions."

"Thanks, honourable sir; your goodness in my behalf cannot be forgotten, though it shall never be said that any impatience to seek the relief you mention, hurried me into a light and improper manner of unburthening my mind. You must know, honoured gentleman, that yesterday, as I sat alone, at this very hour, on my board, reflecting in my thoughts—for the plain reason that my envious neighbour had enticed all the newly arrived customers to his own shop—well, sir, the head will be busy when the hands are idle; there I sat, as I have briefly told you, reflecting in my thoughts, like any other ac-



countable being, on the calamities of life, and on the great experiences that I have had in the wars. For you must know, valiant gentleman, besides the affair in the land of the Medes and Persians, and the Porteous mob in Edinbro', five cruel and bloody"—

"There is that in your air which sufficiently proclaims the soldier," interrupted his listener, who evidently struggled to keep down his rising impatience; "but, as my time is so precious, I would now more especially hear what you have to say concerning yonder ship."

"Yes, sir, one gets a military look after seeing numberless wars; and so, happily for the need of both, I have now come to the part of my secret which touches more particularly on the character of that vessel. There sat I, reflecting on the manner in which the strange seamen had been deluded by my tonguey neighbour—for, as you should know, sir, a desperate talker is that Tape, and a younker who has seen but one war at the utmost—therefore, was I thinking of the manner in which he had enticed my lawful customers from my shop, when, as one thought is the father of another, the following concluding reasoning, as our pious priest has it weekly in his reviving and searching discourses, came uppermost in my mind: If these mariners were honest and conscientious slavers, would they overlook a labouring man with a large family, to pour their well-earned gold into the lap of a common babbler? I proclaimed to myself at once, sir, that they would not. I was bold to say the same in my own mind; and, thereupon, I openly put the question to all in hearing, If they are not slavers, what are they? A question which the King himself would, in his royal wisdom, allow to be a question easier asked than answered; upon which I replied, If the vessel be no fair-trading slaver, nor a common cruiser of his Ma-



jesty, it is as tangible as the best man's reasoning, that she may be neither more nor less than the ship of that nefarious pirate the Red Rover."

"The Red Rover!" exclaimed the stranger in green, with a start so natural as to evidence that his dying interest in the tailor's narrative was suddenly and powerfully revived. "That indeed would be a secret worth having!—but why do you suppose the same?"

"For sundry reasons, which I am now about to name, in their respective order. In the first place, she is an armed ship, sir. In the second, she is no lawful cruiser, or the same would be publicly known, and by no one sooner than myself, inasmuch as it is seldom that I do not finger a penny from the King's ships. In the third place, the burglarious and unfeeling conduct of the few seamen who have landed from her go to prove it; and, lastly, what is well proved may be considered as substantially established. These are what, sir, I should call the opening premises of my inferences, all of which I hope you will properly lay before the royal mind of his Majesty."

The barrister in green listened to the somewhat wire-drawn deductions of Homespun with great attention, notwithstanding the confused and obscure manner in which they were delivered by the aspiring tradesman. His keen eye rolled quickly, and often, from the vessel to the countenance of his companion; but several moments elapsed before he saw fit to make any reply. The reckless gayety with which he had introduced himself, and which he had hitherto maintained in the discourse, was entirely superseded by a musing and abstracted air, which sufficiently proved, that, whatever levity he might betray in common, he was far from being a stranger to deep and absorbing thought. Suddenly throwing off his air of gravity, however, he assumed one in



which irony and sincerity were singularly blended, and, laying his hand familiarly on the shoulder of the expecting tailor, he replied—

“You have communicated such matter as becometh a faithful and loyal servant of the King. It is well known that a heavy price is set on the head of the meanest follower of the Rover, and that a rich, ay, a splendid reward will be the fortune of him who is the instrument of delivering the whole knot of miscreants into the hands of the executioner. Indeed, I know not but some marked evidence of the royal pleasure might follow such a service. There was Phipps, a man of humble origin, who received knighthood—”

“Knighthood!” echoed the tailor, in awful admiration.

“Knighthood,” coolly repeated the stranger; “honourable and chivalric knighthood. What may have been the appellation you received from your sponsors in baptism?”

“My given name, gracious and grateful sir, is Hector.”

“And the house itself?—the distinctive appellation of the family?”

“We have *always* been called Homespun.”

“Sir Hector Homespun will sound as well as another! But to secure these rewards, my friend, it is necessary to be discreet. I admire your ingenuity, and am a convert to your logic. You have so entirely demonstrated the truth of your suspicions, that I have no more doubt of yonder vessel being the pirate, than I have of your wearing spurs, and being called sir Hector. The two things are equally established in my mind: but it is needful that we proceed in the matter with caution. I understand you to say, that no one else has been enlightened by your erudition in this affair?”

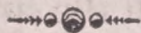


"Not a soul. Tape himself is ready to swear that the crew are conscientious slavers."

"So best. We must first render conclusions certain; then to our reward. Meet me at the hour of eleven this night, at yonder low point, where the land juts into the outer harbour. From that stand will we make our observations; and, having removed every doubt, let the morning produce a discovery that shall ring from the Colony of the Bay to the settlements of Oglethorpe. Until then we part; for it is not wise that we be longer seen in conference. Remember silence, punctuality, and the favour of the King. These are our watch-words."

"Adieu, honourable gentlemen," said his companion, making a reverence nearly to the earth, as the other slightly touched his hat in passing.

"Adieu, sir Hector," returned the stranger in green, with an affable smile and a gracious wave of the hand. He then walked slowly up the wharf, and disappeared behind the mansion of the Homespuns; leaving the head of that ancient family, like many a predecessor and many a successor, so rapt in the admiration of his own good fortune, and so blinded by his folly, that, while physically he saw to the right and to the left as well as ever, his mental vision was completely obscured in the clouds of ambition.



### CHAPTER III.

ALONZO. "Good boatswain, have care."—*Tempest*.

THE instant the stranger had separated from the credulous tailor, he lost his assumed air in one far more natural and sedate. Still it would seem that thought was an unwonted, or an unwelcome tenant of his mind; for, switching his boot with his little



riding whip, he entered the principal street of the place with a light step and a wandering eye. Though his look was unsettled, few of the individuals, whom he passed, escaped his quick glances; and it was quite apparent, from the hurried manner in which he began to regard objects, that his mind was not less active than his body. A stranger thus accoutred, and one bearing about his person so many evidences of his recent acquaintance with the road, did not fail to attract the attention of the provident publicans we have had occasion to mention in our opening chapter. Declining the civilities of the most favoured of the inn-keepers, he suffered his steps to be, oddly enough, arrested by the one whose house was the usual haunt of the hangers-on of the port.

On entering the bar-room of this tavern, as it was called, but which in the mother country would probably have aspired to be termed no more than a pot-house, he found the hospitable apartment thronged with its customary revellers. A slight interruption was produced by the appearance of a guest who was altogether superior, in mien and attire, to the ordinary customers of the house, but it ceased the moment the stranger had thrown himself on a bench, and intimated to the host the nature of his wants. As the latter furnished the required draught, he made a sort of apology, which was intended for the ears of all his customers nigh the stranger, for the manner in which an individual, in the further end of the long narrow room, not only monopolized the discourse, but appeared to extort the attention of all within hearing to some portentous legend he was recounting.

“It is the boatswain of the slaver in the outer harbour, squire,” the worthy disciple of Bacchus concluded; “a man who has followed the water many a day, and who has seen sights and prodigies enough to fill a smart volume. Old Bor’us the peo-



ple call him, though his lawful name is Jack Nightingale. Is the toddy to the squire's relish?"

The stranger assented to the latter query, by smacking his lips, and bowing, as he put down the nearly untouched draught. He then turned his head, to examine the individual who might, by the manner in which he declaimed, have been termed, in the language of the country, the second "orator of the day."

A stature which greatly exceeded six feet; enormous whiskers, that quite concealed a moiety of his grim countenance; a scar, which was the memorial of a badly healed gash, that had once threatened to divide that moiety in quarters; limbs in proportion; the whole rendered striking by the dress of a seaman; a long, tarnished silver chain, and a little whistle of the same metal, served to render the individual in question sufficiently remarkable. Without appearing to be in the smallest degree aware of the entrance of one altogether so superior to the class of his usual auditors, this son of the Ocean continued his narrative as follows, and in a voice that seemed given to him by nature as if in very mockery of his musical name; indeed, so very near did his tones approach to the low murmurings of a bull, that some little practice was necessary to accustom the ear to the strangely uttered words.

"Well!" he continued, thrusting his brawny arm forth, with the fist clenched, indicating the necessary point of the compass by the thumb; "the coast of Guinea might have lain hereaway, and the wind, you see, was dead off shore, blowing in squalls, as a cat spits, all the same as if the old fellow, who keeps it bagged for the use of us seamen, sometimes let the stopper slip through his fingers, and was sometimes fetching it up again with a double turn round the end of his sack.—You know what a sack is, brother?"

This abrupt question was put to the gaping bump-



kin, already known to the reader, who, with the nether garment just received from the tailor under his arm, had lingered, to add the incidents of the present legend to the stock of lore that he had already obtained for the ears of his kinsfolk in the country. A general laugh, at the expense of the admiring Pardon, succeeded. Nightingale bestowed a knowing wink on one or two of his familiars, and, profiting by the occasion, "to freshen his nip," as he quaintly styled swallowing a pint of rum and water, he continued his narrative by saying, in a sort of admonitory tone,—

"And the time may come when you will know what a round-turn is, too, if you let go your hold of honesty. A man's neck was made, brother, to keep his head above water, and not to be stretched out of shape like a pair of badly fitted dead-eyes. Therefore, have your reckoning worked up in season, and the lead of conscience going, when you find yourself drifting on the shoals of temptation." Then, rolling his tobacco in his mouth, he looked boldly about him, like one who had acquitted himself of a moral obligation, and continued: "Well, there lay the land, and, as I was saying, the wind was here, at east-and-by-south, or mayhap at east-and-by-south-half-south, sometimes blowing like a fin-back in a hurry, and sometimes leaving all the canvas chafing ag'in the rigging and spars, as if a bolt of duck cost no more nor a rich man's blessing. I didn't like the looks of the weather, seeing that there was altogether too much unsartainty for a quiet watch, so I walked aft, in order to put myself in the way of giving an opinion, if-so-be such a thing should be asked. You must know, brothers, that, according to my notions of religion and behaviour, a man is not good for much, unless he has a full share of manners; therefore I am never known to put my spoon into the captain's mess, unless I am invited, for the plain reason, that



my berth is for'ard, and his'n aft. I do not say in which end of a ship the better man is to be found; that is a matter concerning which men have different opinions, though most judges in the business are agreed. But aft I walked, to put myself in the way of giving an opinion, if one should be asked; nor was it long before the thing came to pass just as I had foreseen. 'Mister Nightingale,' says he; for our Captain is a gentleman, and never forgets his behaviour on deck, or when any of the ship's company are at hand, 'Mister Nightingale,' says he, 'what do you think of that rag of a cloud, hereaway at the north-west?' says he. 'Why, sir,' says I, boldly, for I'm never backward in speaking, when properly spoken to, so, 'why, sir,' says I, 'saving your Honour's better judgment,'—which was all a sham, for he was but a chicken to me in years and experience, but then I never throw hot ashes to windward, or any thing else that is warm—so, 'sir,' says I, 'it is my advice to hand the three topsails and to stow the jib. We are in no hurry; for the plain reason, that Guinea will be to-morrow just where Guinea is to-night. As for keeping the ship steady in these matters of squalls, we have the mainsail on her—'

"You should have furl'd your mainsail too," exclaimed a voice from behind, that was quite as dogmatical, though a little less grum, than that of the loquacious boatswain.

"What know-nothing says that?" demanded Nightingale fiercely, as if all his latent ire was excited by so rude and daring an interruption.

"A man who has run Africa down, from Bon to Good-Hope, more than once, and who knows a white squall from a rainbow," returned Dick Fid, edging his short person stoutly towards his furious adversary, making his way through the crowd by which the important personage of the boatswain was environed by dint of his massive shoulders; "ay, brother,



and a man, know-much or know-nothing, who would never advise his officer to keep so much after-sail on a ship, when there was the likelihood of the wind taking her aback."

To this bold vindication of an opinion which all present deemed to be so audacious, there succeeded a general and loud murmur. Encouraged by this evidence of his superior popularity, Nightingale was not slow, nor very meek, with his retort; and then followed a clamorous concert, in which the voices of the company in general served for the higher and shriller notes, through which the bold and vigorous assertions, contradictions, and opinions of the two principal disputants were heard running a thorough-bass.

For some time, no part of the discussion was very distinct, so great was the confusion of tongues; and there were certain symptoms of an intention, on the part of Fid and the boatswain, to settle their controversy by the last appeal. During this moment of suspense, the former had squared his firm-built frame in front of his gigantic opponent, and there were very vehement passings and counter-passings, in the way of gestures from four athletic arms, each of which was knobbed, like a fashionable rattan, with a lump of bones, knuckles, and sinews, that threatened annihilation to any thing that should oppose them. As the general clamour, however, gradually abated, the chief reasoners began to be heard; and, as if content to rely on their respective powers of eloquence, each gradually relinquished his hostile attitude, and appeared disposed to maintain his ground by a member scarcely less terrible than his brawny arm.

"You are a bold seaman, brother," said Nightingale, resuming his seat, "and, if saying was doing, no doubt you would make a ship talk. But I, who have seen fleets of two and three deckers—and that



of all nations, except your Mohawks, mayhap, whose cruisers I will confess never to have fallen in with—lying as snug as so many white gulls, under reefed mainsails, know how to take the strain off a ship, and to keep my bulkheads in their places.”

“I deny the judgment of heaving-to a boat under her after square-sails,” retorted Dick. “Give her the staysails, if you will, and no harm done; but a true seaman will never get a bagful of wind between his mainmast and his lee-swifter, if-so-be he knows his business. But words are like thunder, which rumbles aloft, without coming down a spar, as I have yet seen; let us therefore put the question to some one who has been on the water, and knows a little of life and of ships.”

“If the oldest admiral in his Majesty’s fleet was here, he wouldn’t be backward in saying who is right and who is wrong. I say, brothers, if there is a man among you all who has had the advantage of a sea education, let him speak, in order that the truth of this matter may not be hid, like a marlingspike jammed between a brace-block and a blackened yard.”

“Here, then, is the man,” returned Fid; and, stretching out his arm, he seized Scipio by the collar, and drew him, without ceremony, into the centre of the circle, that had opened around the two disputants. “There is a man for you, who has made one more voyage between this and Africa than myself, for the reason that he was born there. Now, answer as if you were hallooing from a lee-earing, S’ip, under what sail would you heave-to a ship, on the coast of your native country, with the danger of a white squall at hand?”

“I no heave-’em-to,” said the black, “I make ’em scud.”

“Ay, boy; but, to be in readiness for the puff, would you jam her up under a mainsail, or let her lie a little off under a fore course?”



"Any fool know dat," returned Scipio, grumly, and evidently tired already of being thus catechised.

"If you want 'em fall off, how you'm expect, in reason, he do it under a main course? You answer me dat, misser Dick."

"Gentlemen," said Nightingale, looking about him with an air of great gravity, "I put it to your Honours, is it genteel behaviour to bring a nigger, in this out-of-the-way fashion, to give an opinion in the teeth of a white man?"

This appeal to the wounded dignity of the company was answered by a common murmur. Scipio, who was prepared to maintain, and would have maintained, his professional opinion, after his positive and peculiar manner, against any disputant, had not the heart to resist so general an evidence of the impropriety of his presence. Without uttering a word in vindication or apology, he folded his arms, and walked out of the house, with the submission and meekness of one who had been too long trained in humility to rebel. This desertion on the part of his companion was not, however, so quietly acquiesced in by Fid, who found himself thus unexpectedly deprived of the testimony of the black. He loudly remonstrated against his retreat; but, finding it in vain, he crammed the end of several inches of tobacco into his mouth, swearing, as he followed the African, and keeping his eye, at the same time, firmly fastened on his adversary, that, in his opinion, "the lad, if he was fairly skinned, would be found to be the whiter man of the two."

The triumph of the boatswain was now complete; nor was he at all sparing of his exultation.

"Gentlemen," he said, addressing himself, with an air of increased confidence, to the motley audience who surrounded him, "you see that reason is like a ship bearing down with studding-sails on both sides, leaving a straight wake and no favours. Now, I



scorn boasting, nor do I know who the fellow is who has just sheered off, in time to save his character, but this I will say, that the man is not to be found, between Boston and the West Indies, who knows better than myself how to make a ship walk, or how to make her stand still, provided I"——

The deep voice of Nightingale became suddenly hushed, and his eye was riveted, by a sort of enchantment, on the keen glance of the stranger in green, whose countenance was now seen blended among the more vulgar faces of the crowd.

"Mayhap," continued the boatswain, swallowing his words, in the surprise of seeing himself so unexpectedly confronted by so imposing an eye, "mayhap this gentleman has some knowledge of the sea, and can decide the matter in dispute."

"We do not study naval tactics at the universities," returned the other briskly, though I will confess, from the little I have heard, I am altogether in favour of *scudding*."

He pronounced the latter word with an emphasis which rendered it questionable if he did not mean to pun; the more especially as he threw down his reckoning, and instantly left the field to the quiet possession of Nightingale. The latter, after a short pause, resumed his narrative, though, either from weariness or some other cause, it was observed that his voice was far less positive than before, and that his tale was cut prematurely short. After completing his narrative and his grog, he staggered to the beach, whither a boat was shortly after despatched to convey him on board the ship, which, during all this time, had not ceased to be the constant subject of the suspicious examination of the good-man Home-spun.

In the mean while, the stranger in green had pursued his walk along the main street of the town. Fid had given chase to the disconcerted Scipio, grum-



bling as he went, and uttering no very delicate remarks on the knowledge and seamanship of the boatswain. They soon joined company again, the former changing his attack to the negro, whom he liberally abused, for abandoning a point which he maintained was as simple, and as true, as "that yonder bit of a schooner would make more way, going wing-and-wing, than jammed up on a wind."

Probably diverted with the touches of peculiar character he had detected in this singular pair of confederates, or possibly led by his own wayward humour, the stranger followed their footsteps. After turning from the water, they mounted a hill, the latter a little in the rear of his pilots, until he lost sight of them in a bend of the street, or rather road; for, by this time, they were past even the little suburbs of the town. Quickening his steps, the barrister, as he had announced himself to be, was glad to catch a glimpse of the two worthies, seated under a fence, several minutes after he had believed them lost. They were making a frugal meal, off the contents of a little bag which the white had borne under his arm, and from which he now dispensed liberally to his companion, who had taken his post sufficiently nigh to proclaim that perfect amity was restored, though still a little in the back ground, in deference to the superior condition which the other enjoyed through favour of his colour. Approaching the spot, the stranger observed,—

"If you make so free with the bag, my lads, your third man may have to go supperless to bed."

"Who hails?" said Dick, looking up from his bone, with an expression much like that of a mastiff when engaged at a similar employment.

"I merely wished to remind you that you had another messmate," cavalierly returned the other.

"Will you take a cut, brother?" said the seaman, offering the bag, with the liberality of a sailor, the



moment he fancied there was an indirect demand made on its contents.

“ You still mistake my meaning ; on the wharf you had another companion.”

“ Ay, ay ; he is in the offing there, overhauling that bit of a light-house, which is badly enough moored, unless they mean it to shew the channel to your ox-teams and inland traders ; hereaway, gentlemen, where you see that pile of stones which seems likely to be coming down shortly by-the-run.”

The stranger looked in the direction indicated by the other, and saw the young mariner, to whom he had alluded, standing at the foot of a ruined tower, which was crumbling under the slow operations of time, at no great distance from the place where he stood. Throwing a handful of small change to the seamen, he wished them a better meal, and crossed the fence, with an apparent intention of examining the ruin also.

“ The lad is free with his coppers,” said Dick, suspending the movements of his teeth, to give the stranger another and a better look ; “ but, as they will not grow where he has planted them, S’ip, you may turn them over to my pocket. An off-handed and a free-handed chap that, Africa ; but then these law-dealers get all their pence of the devil, and they are sure of more, when the shot begins to run low in the locker.”

Leaving the negro to collect the money, and to transfer it, as in duty bound, to the hands of him who, if not his master, was at all times ready and willing to exercise the authority of one, we shall follow the stranger in his walk toward the tottering edifice. There was little about the ruin itself to attract the attention of one who, from his assertions, had probably often enjoyed the opportunities of examining far more imposing remains of former ages, on the other side of the Atlantic. It was a small



circular tower, which stood on rude pillars, connected by arches, and might have been constructed, in the infancy of the country, as a place of defence, though it is far more probable that it was a work of a less warlike nature. More than half a century after the period of which we are writing, this little edifice, peculiar in its form, its ruinous condition, and its materials, has suddenly become the study and the theme of that very learned sort of individual, the American antiquarian. It is not surprising that a ruin thus honoured should have become the object of many a hot and erudite discussion. While the chivalrous in the arts and in the antiquities of the country have been gallantly breaking their lances around the mouldering walls, the less instructed and the less zealous have regarded the combatants with the same species of wonder as they would have manifested had they been present when the renowned knight of La Mancha tilted against those other wind-mills, so ingeniously described by the immortal Cervantes.

On reaching the place, the stranger in green gave his boot a smart blow with the riding whip, as if to attract the attention of the abstracted young sailor, and freely remarked,—

“A very pretty object this would be, if covered with ivy, to be seen peeping through an opening in a wood. But I beg pardon; gentlemen of your *profession* have little to do with woods and crumbling stones. Yonder is the tower,” pointing to the tall masts of the ship in the outer harbour, “you love to look on; and your only ruin is a wreck!”

“You seem familiar with our tastes, sir,” coldly returned the other.

“It is by instinct, then; for it is certain I have had but little opportunity of acquiring my knowledge by actual communion with any of the—cloth; nor do I perceive that I am likely to be more fortunate



at present. Let us be frank, my friend, and talk in amity: What do you see about this pile of stones, that can keep you so long from your study of yonder noble and gallant ship?"

"Did it then surprise you that a seaman out of employment should examine a vessel that he finds to his mind, perhaps with an intention to ask for service?"

"Her commander must be a dull fellow, if he refuse it to so proper a lad! But you seem to be too well instructed for any of the meaner births."

"Births!" repeated the other, again fastening his eyes, with a singular expression, on the stranger in green.

"Births! It is your nautical word for 'situation,' or 'station;' is it not? We know but little of the marine vocabulary, we barristers; but I think I may venture on that as the true Doric. Am I justified by your authority?"

"The word is certainly not yet obsolete; and, by a figure, it is as certainly correct in the sense you used it."

"Obsolete!" repeated the stranger in green, returning the meaning look he had just received: "Is that the name of any part of a ship? Perhaps, by *figure*, you mean figure-head; and, by *obsolete*, the long-boat!"

The young seaman laughed; and, as if this sally had broken through the barrier of his reserve, his manner lost much of its cold restraint during the remainder of their conference.

"It is just as plain," he said, "that you have been at sea, as it is that I have been at school. Since we have both been so fortunate, we may afford to be generous, and cease speaking in parables. For instance, what think you has been the object and use of this ruin, when it was in good condition?"

"In order to judge of that," returned the stranger



in green, "it may be necessary to examine it more closely. Let us ascend."

As he spoke, the barrister mounted, by a crazy ladder, to the floor which lay just above the crown of the arches, through which he passed by an open trap-door. His companion hesitated to follow; but, observing that the other expected him at the summit of the ladder, and that he very kindly pointed out a defective round, he sprang forward, and went up the ascent with the agility and steadiness peculiar to his calling.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the stranger in green, looking about at the naked walls, which were formed of such small and irregular stones as to give the building the appearance of dangerous frailty, "with good oaken plank for our deck, as you would say, and the sky for our roof, as we call the upper part of a house at the universities. Now let us speak of things on the lower world. A—a—; I forget what you said was your usual appellation—"

"That might depend on circumstances. I have been known by different names in different situations. However, if you call me Wilder, I shall not fail to answer."

"Wilder!" a good name; though, I dare say, it would have been as true were it Wildone. You young ship-boys have the character of being a little erratic in your humours at times. How many tender hearts have you left to sigh for your errors, amid shady bowers, while you have been ploughing—that is the word, I believe—ploughing the salt-sea ocean?"

"Few sigh for me," returned Wilder, thoughtfully, though he evidently began to chafe a little under this free sort of catechism. "Let us now return to our study of the tower. What think you has been its object?"

"Its present use is plain, and its former use can be no great mystery. It holds at this moment two



light hearts ; and, if I am not mistaken, as many light heads, not overstocked with the stores of wisdom. Formerly it had its granaries of corn, at least, and, I doubt not, certain little quadrupeds, who were quite as light of fingers as we are of head and heart. In plain English, it has been a mill."

"There are those who think it had been a fortress."

"Hum! The place might do, at need," returned he in green, casting a rapid and peculiar glance around him. "But mill it has been, notwithstanding one might wish it a nobler origin. The windy situation, the pillars to keep off the invading vermin, the shape, the air, the very complexion, prove it. Whir-r-r, whir-r-r; there has been clatter enough here in time past, I warrant you. Hist! It is not done yet!"

Stepping lightly to one of the little perforations which had once served as windows to the tower, he cautiously thrust his head through the opening; and, after gazing there half a minute, he withdrew it again, making a gesture to the attentive Wilder to be silent. The latter complied; nor was it long before the nature of the interruption was sufficiently explained.

The silvery voice of woman was first heard at a little distance; and then, as the speakers drew nigher, the sounds arose directly from beneath, within the very shadow of the tower. By a sort of tacit consent, Wilder and the barrister chose spots favourable to the execution of such a purpose; and each continued, during the time the visitors remained near the ruin, examining their persons, unseen themselves, and we are sorry we must do so much violence to the breeding of two such important characters in our legend, amused and attentive listeners also to their conversation



## CHAPTER IV.

“They fool me to the top of my bent.”—*Hamlet*.

THE party below consisted of four individuals, all of whom were females. One was a lady in the decline of her years ; another was past the middle age ; the third was on the very threshold of what is called “life,” as it is applied to intercourse with the world ; and the fourth was a negress, who might have seen some five-and-twenty revolutions of the seasons. The latter, at that time, and in that country, of course appeared only in the character of a humble, though perhaps favoured domestic.

“And now, my child, that I have given you all the advice which circumstances and your own excellent heart need,” said the elderly lady, among the first words that were distinctly intelligible to the listeners, “I will change the ungracious office to one more agreeable. You will tell your father of my continued affection, and of the promise he has given, that you are to return once again, before we separate for the last time.”

This speech was addressed to the younger female, and was apparently received with as much tenderness and sincerity as it was uttered. The one who was addressed raised her eyes, which were glittering with tears she evidently struggled to conceal, and answered in a voice that sounded in the ears of the two youthful listeners like the notes of the Syren, so very sweet and musical were its tones.

“It is useless to remind me of a promise, my beloved aunt, which I have so much interest in remembering,” she said. “I hope for even more than you have perhaps dared to wish ; if my father does not return with me in the spring, it shall not be for want of urging on my part.”



"Our good Wyllys will lend her aid," returned the aunt, smiling and bowing to the third female, with that mixture of suavity and form which was peculiar to the stately manners of the time, and which was rarely neglected, when a superior addressed an inferior. "She is entitled to command some interest with General Grayson, from her fidelity and services.

"She is entitled to every thing that love and heart can give!" exclaimed the niece, with a haste and earnestness that proclaimed how willingly she would temper the formal politeness of the other by the warmth of her own affectionate manner; "my father will scarcely refuse *her* any thing."

"And have we the assurance of Mrs Wyllys that she will be in our interests?" demanded the aunt, without permitting her own sense of propriety to be overcome by the stronger feelings of her niece; "with so powerful an ally, our league will be invincible."

"I am so entirely of opinion, that the salubrious air of this healthful island is of great importance to my young charge, Madam, that, were all other considerations wanting, the little I can do to aid your wishes shall be sure to be done."

Wyllys spoke with dignity, and perhaps with some portion of that reserve which distinguished all the communications between the wealthy and high-born aunt and the salaried and dependent governess of her brother's heiress. Still her manner was gentle, and the voice, like that of her pupil, soft and strikingly feminine.

"We may then consider the victory as achieved, as my late husband the Rear-Admiral was accustomed to say. Admiral de Lacey, my dear Mrs Wyllys, adopted it in early life as a maxim, by which all his future conduct was governed, and by adhering to which he acquired no small share of his professional



reputation, that, in order to be successful, it was only necessary to be determined one would be so;—a noble and inspiriting rule, and one that could not fail to lead to those signal results which, as we all know them, I need not mention.”

Wyllys bowed her head, in acknowledgment of the truth of the opinion, and in testimony of the renown of the deceased Admiral; but did not think it necessary to make any reply. Instead of allowing the subject to occupy her mind any longer, she turned to her young pupil, and observed, speaking in a voice and with a manner from which every appearance of restraint was banished,—

“Gertrude, my love, you will have pleasure in returning to this charming island, and to these cheering sea breezes.”

“And to my aunt!” exclaimed Gertrude. “I wish my father could be persuaded to dispose of his estates in Carolina, and come northward, to reside the whole year.”

“It is not quite as easy for an affluent proprietor to remove as you may imagine, my child,” returned Mrs de Lacey. “Much as I wish that some such plan could be adopted, I never press my brother on the subject. Besides, I am not certain, that, if we were ever to make another change in the family, it would not be to return *home* altogether. It is now more than a century, Mrs Wyllys, since the Graysons came into the colonies, in a moment of dissatisfaction with the government in England. My great-grandfather, sir Everard, was displeased with his second son, and the dissension led my grandfather to the province of Carolina. But, as the breach has long since been healed, I often think my brother and myself may yet return to the halls of our ancestors. Much will, however, depend on the manner in which we dispose of our treasure on this side of the Atlantic.”



As the really well-meaning, though, perhaps, a little too much self-satisfied lady concluded her remark, she glanced her eye at the perfectly unconscious subject of the close of her speech. Gertrude had, as usual, when her aunt chose to favour her governess with any of her family reminiscences, turned her head aside, and was now offering her cheek, burning with health, and perhaps a little with shame, to the cooling influence of the evening breeze. The instant the voice of Mrs de Lacey had ceased, she turned hastily to her companions; and, pointing to a noble-looking ship, whose masts, as it lay in the inner harbour, were seen rising above the roofs of the town, she exclaimed, as if glad to change the subject in any manner,—

“And yonder gloomy prison is to be our home, dear Mrs Wylls, for the next month!”

“I hope your dislike to the sea has magnified the time,” mildly returned her governess; “the passage between this place and Carolina has been often made in a shorter period.”

“That it has been so done, I can testify,” resumed the Admiral’s widow, adhering a little pertinaciously to a train of thoughts, which, once thoroughly awakened in her bosom, was not easily diverted into another channel, “since my late estimable and (I feel certain all who hear me will acquiesce when I add) gallant husband once conducted a squadron of his Royal Master, from one extremity of his Majesty’s American dominions to the other, in a time less than that named by my niece: It may have made some difference in his speed that he was in pursuit of the enemies of his King and country, but still the fact proves that the voyage can be made within the month.”

“There is that dreadful Henlopen, with its sandy shoals and shipwrecks on one hand, and that stream



they call the Gulf on the other!" exclaimed Gertrude, with a shudder, and a burst of natural female terror, which makes timidity sometimes attractive, when exhibited in the person of youth and beauty. "If it were not for Henlopen, and its gales, and its shoals, and its gulfs, I could think only of the pleasure of meeting my father."

Mrs Wyllys, who never encouraged her pupil in those natural weaknesses, however pretty and becoming they might appear to other eyes, turned with a steady mien to the young lady, as she remarked, with a brevity and decision that were intended to put the question of fear at rest for ever,—

"If all the dangers you appear to apprehend existed in reality, the passage would not be made daily, or even hourly, in safety. You have often, Madam, come from the Carolinas by sea, in company with Admiral de Lacey?"

"Never," the widow promptly and a little drily remarked. "The water has not agreed with my constitution, and I have never neglected to journey by land. But then you know, Wyllys, as the consort and relict of a flag-officer, it was not seemly that I should be ignorant of naval science. I believe there are few ladies in the British empire who are more familiar with ships, either singly or in squadron, particularly the latter, than myself. This information I have naturally acquired, as the companion of an officer, whose fortune it was to lead fleets. I presume these are matters of which you are profoundly ignorant."

The calm, dignified countenance of Wyllys, on which it would seem as if long cherished and painful recollections had left a settled, but mild expression of sorrow, that rather tempered than destroyed the traces of character which were still remarkable in her firm collected eye, became clouded, for a mo-



ment, with a deeper shade of melancholy. After hesitating, as if willing to change the subject, she replied,—

“I have not been altogether a stranger to the sea. It has been my lot to have made many long, and some perilous voyages.”

“As a mere passenger. But we wives of sailors only, among our sex, can lay claim to any real knowledge of the noble profession! What natural object is there, or can there be,” exclaimed the nautical dowager, in a burst of professional enthusiasm, “finer than a stately ship breasting the billows, as I have heard the Admiral say a thousand times, its taffrail ploughing the main, and its cut-water gliding after, like a sinuous serpent pursuing its shining wake, as a living creature choosing its path on the land, and leaving the bone under its fore-foot, a beacon for those that follow? I know not, my dear Wyllys, if I make myself intelligible to you, but, to my instructed eye, this charming description conveys a picture of all that is grand and beautiful!”

The latent smile, on the countenance of the governess, might have betrayed that she was imagining the deceased Admiral had not been altogether devoid of the waggery of his vocation, had not a slight noise, which sounded like the rustling of the wind, but which in truth was suppressed laughter, proceeded from the upper room of the tower. The words, “It is lovely!” were still on the lips of the youthful Gertrude, who saw all the beauty of the picture her aunt had essayed to describe, without descending to the humble employment of verbal criticism. But her voice became hushed, and her attitude that of startled attention:—

“Did you hear nothing?” she said.

“The rats have not yet altogether deserted the mill,” was the calm reply of Wyllys.



"Mill! my dear Mrs Wyllys, will you persist in calling this picturesque ruin *a mill*?"

"However fatal it may be to its charms, in the eyes of eighteen, I must call it *a mill*."

"Ruins are not so plenty in this country, my dear governess," returned her pupil, laughing, while the ardour of her eye denoted how serious she was in defending her favourite opinion, "as to justify us in robbing them of any little claims to interest they may happen to possess."

"Then, happier is the country! Ruins in a land are, like most of the signs of decay in the human form, sad evidences of abuses and passions, which have hastened the inroads of time. These provinces are like yourself, my Gertrude, in their freshness and their youth, and, comparatively, in their innocence also. Let us hope for both a long, an useful, and a happy existence."

"Thank you for myself, and for my country; but still I can never admit this picturesque ruin has been *a mill*."

"Whatever it may have been, it has long occupied its present place, and has the appearance of continuing where it is much longer, which is more than can be said of our prison, as you call yonder stately ship, in which we are so soon to embark. Unless my eyes deceive me, Madam, those masts are moving slowly past the chimnies of the town."

"You are very right, Wyllys. The seamen are towing the vessel into the outer harbour, where they will warp her fast to the anchors, and thus secure her, until they shall be ready to unmake their sails, in order to put to sea in the morning. This is a manœuvre often performed, and one which the Admiral has so clearly explained, that I should find little difficulty in superintending it in my own person, were it suitable to my sex and station."



"This is, then, a hint that all our own preparations are not completed. However lovely this spot may seem, Gertrude, we must now leave it, for some months at least."

"Yes," continued Mrs de Lacey, slowly following the footsteps of the governess, who had already moved from beneath the ruin; "whole fleets have often been towed to their anchors, and there warped, waiting for wind and tide to serve. None of our sex know the dangers of the Ocean, but we who have been bound in the closest of all ties to officers of rank and great service; and none others can ever truly enjoy the real grandeur of the ennobling profession. A charming object is a vessel cutting the waves with her taffrail, and chasing her wake on the trackless waters, like a courser that ever keeps in his path, though dashing madly on at the very top of his speed!—"

The reply of Mrs Wyllys was not audible to the covert listeners. Gertrude had followed her companions; but, when at some little distance from the tower, she paused, to take a parting look at its mouldering walls. A profound stillness succeeded for more than a minute.

"There is something in that pile of stones, Cassandra," she said to the jet-black maiden at her elbow, "that could make me wish it had been something more than a mill."

"There rat in 'em," returned the literal and simple-minded black; "you hear what Misse Wyllys say?"

Gertrude turned, laughed, patted the dark cheek of her attendant, with fingers that looked like snow by the contrast, as if to chide her for wishing to destroy the pleasing illusion she would so gladly harbour, and then bounded down the hill after her aunt and governess, like a joyous and youthful Atalanta.

The two singularly consorted listeners in the tow-



er stood gazing, at their respective look-outs, so long as the smallest glimpse of the flowing robe of her light form was to be seen; and then they turned to each other, and stood confronted, the eyes of each endeavouring to read the expression of his neighbour's countenance.

"I am ready to make an affidavit before my Lord High Chancellor," suddenly exclaimed the barrister, "that this has never been a mill!"

"Your opinion has undergone a sudden change!"

"I am open to conviction, as I hope to be a judge. The case has been argued by a powerful advocate, and I have lived to see my error."

"And yet there are rats in the place."

"Land rats, or water rats?" quickly demanded the other, giving his companion one of those startling and searching glances, which his keen eye had so freely at command.

"Both, I believe," was the dry and caustic reply; "certainly the former, or the gentlemen of the long robe are much injured by report."

The barrister laughed; nor did his temper appear in the slightest degree ruffled at so free an allusion at his learned and honourable profession.

"You gentlemen of the Ocean have such an honest and amusing frankness about you," he said, "that I vow to God you are overwhelming. I am a downright admirer of your noble calling, and something skilled in its terms. What spectacle, for instance, can be finer than a noble ship 'stemming the waves with her taffrail,' and chasing her wake, like a racer on the course!"

"Leaving the 'bone in her mouth' under her stern, as a light-house for all that come after!"

Then, as if they found singular satisfaction in dwelling on these images of the worthy relict of the gallant Admiral, they broke out simultaneously into a fit of clamorous merriment, that caused the old



ruin to ring, as in its best days of windy power. The barrister was the first to regain his self-command, for the mirth of the young mariner was joyous, and without the least restraint.

“But this is dangerous ground for any but a seaman’s widow to touch,” the former observed, as suddenly causing his laughter to cease as he had admitted of its indulgence. “The younger, she who is no lover of a mill, is a rare and lovely creature! it would seem that she is the niece of the nautical critic.”

The young mariner ceased laughing in his turn, as though he were suddenly convinced of the glaring impropriety of making so near a relative of the fair vision he had seen the subject of his merriment. Whatever might have been his secret thoughts, he was content with replying,—

“She so declared herself.”

“Tell me,” said the barrister, walking close to the other, like one who communicated an important secret in the question, “was there not something remarkable, searching, extraordinary, heart-touching, in the voice of her they called Wyllys?”

“Did you note it?”

“It sounded to me like the tones of an oracle—the whisperings of fancy—the very words of truth! It was a strange and persuasive voice!”

“I confess I felt its influence, and in a way for which I cannot account!”

“It amounts to infatuation!” returned the barrister, pacing up and down the little apartment, every trace of humour and irony having disappeared in a look of settled and abstracted care. His companion appeared little disposed to interrupt his meditations, but stood leaning against the naked walls, himself the subject of deep and sorrowful reflection. At length the former shook off his air of thought, with that startling quickness which seemed common to



his manner; he approached a window, and, directing the attention of Wilder to the ship in the outer harbour, abruptly demanded,—

“Has all your interest in yon vessel ceased?”

“Far from it; it is just such a boat as a seaman’s eye most loves to study!”

“Will you venture to board her?”

“At this hour? alone? I know not her commander, or her people.”

“There are other hours beside this, and a sailor is certain of a frank reception from his messmates.”

“These slavers are not always willing to be boarded; they carry arms, and know how to keep strangers at a distance.”

“Are there no watch-words, in the masonry of your trade, by which a brother is known? Such terms as ‘stemming the waves with the taffrail,’ for instance, or some of those knowing phrases we have lately heard?”

Wilder kept his own keen look on the countenance of the other, as he thus questioned him, and seemed to ponder long before he ventured on a reply.

“Why do you demand all this of me?” he coldly asked.

“Because, as I believe that ‘faint heart never won fair lady,’ so do I believe that indecision never won a ship. You wish a situation, you say; and, if I were an Admiral, I would make you my flag-captain. At the assizes, when we wish a brief, we have our manner of letting the thing be known. But perhaps I am talking too much at random for an utter stranger. You will however remember, that, though it is the advice of a lawyer, it is given gratuitously.”

“And is it the more to be relied on for such extraordinary liberality?”

“Of that you must judge for yourself,” said the stranger in green, very deliberately putting his foot



on the ladder, and descending, until no part of his person but his head was seen. "Here I go, literally cutting the waves with my taffrail," he added, as he descended backwards, and seeming to take great pleasure in laying particular emphasis on the words. "Adieu, my friend; if we do not meet again, I enjoin you never to forget the rats in the Newport ruin."

He disappeared as he concluded, and in another instant his light form was on the ground. Turning with the most admirable coolness, he gave the bottom of the ladder a trip with one of his feet, and laid the only means of descent prostrate on the earth. Then, looking up at the wondering Wilder, he nodded his head familiarly, repeated his adieu, and passed with a swift step from beneath the arches.

"This is extraordinary conduct," muttered Wilder, who was by the process left a prisoner in the ruin. After ascertaining that a fall from the trap might endanger his legs, the young sailor ran to one of the windows of the place, in order to reproach his treacherous comrade, or indeed to assure himself that he was serious in thus deserting him. The barrister was already out of hailing distance, and, before Wilder had time to decide on what course to take, his active footsteps had led him into the skirts of the town, among the buildings of which his person became immediately lost to the eye.

During all the time occupied by the foregoing scenes and dialogue, Fid and the negro had been diligently discussing the contents of the bag, under the fence where they were last seen. As the appetite of the former became appeased, his didactic disposition returned, and, at the precise moment when Wilder was left alone in the tower, he was intently engaged in admonishing the black on the delicate subject of behaviour in mixed society.

"And so you see, Guinea," he concluded, "in or-



der to keep a weather-helm in company, you are never to throw all aback, and go stern foremost out of a dispute, as you have this day seen fit to do. According to my l'arning, that Master Nightingale is better in a bar-room than in a squall; and if you had just luffed-up on his quarter, when you saw me laying myself athwart his hawse in the argument, you see we should have given him a regular jam in the discourse, and then the fellow would have been shamed in the eyes of all the by-standers. Who hails? what cook is sticking his neighbour's pig now?"

"Lor'! Misser Fid," cried the black, "here mas-ser Harry, wid a head out of port-hole, up dereaway in a light-house, singing-out like a marine in a boat wid a plug out!"

"Ay, ay, let him alone for hailing a top-gallant yard, or a flying-jib-boom! The lad has a voice like a French horn, when he has a mind to tune it! And what the devil is he manning the guns of that weather-beaten wreck for? At all events, if he has to fight his craft alone, there is no one to blame but himself, since he has gone to quarters without beat of drum, or without, in any other manner, seeing fit to muster his people."

As Dick and the negro had both been making the best of their way towards the ruin, from the moment they discovered the situation of their friend, by this time they were within speaking distance of the spot itself. Wilder, in those brief, pithy tones that distinguish the manner in which a sea officer issues his orders, directed them to raise the ladder. When he was liberated, he demanded, with a sufficiently significant air, if they had observed the direction in which the stranger in green had made his retreat?

"Do you mean the chap in boots, who was for shoving his oar into another man's rullock, a bit ago, on the small matter of wharf, hereaway, in a range,



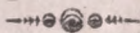
over yonder house, bringing the north-east chimney to bear in a line, with the mizen-top-gallant-mast-head of that ship they are warping into the stream?"

"The very same."

"He made a slant on the wind until he had weathered yonder bit of a barn, and then he tacked and stretched away off here to the east-and-by-south, going large, and with studding sails alow and aloft, as I think, for he made a devil of a head-way."

"Follow," cried Wilder, starting forward in the direction indicated by Fid, without waiting to hear any more of the other's characteristic explanations.

The search, however, was vain. Although they continued their inquiries until long after the sun had set, no one could give them the smallest tidings of what had become of the stranger in green. Some had seen him, and marvelled at his singular costume, and bold and wandering look; but, by all accounts, he had disappeared from the town as strangely and mysteriously as he had entered it.



## CHAPTER V.

"Are you so brave? I'll have you talked with anon."  
*Coriolanus.*

THE good people of the town of Newport sought their rest at an early hour. They were remarkable for that temperance and discretion which, even to this day, distinguish the manners of the inhabitants of New-England. By ten, the door of every house in the place was closed for the night; and it is quite probable, that, before another hour had passed, scarcely an eye was open, among all those which, throughout the day, had been sufficiently alert, not only to superintend the interests of their proper



owners, but to spare some wholesome glances at the concerns of the rest of the neighbourhood.

The landlord of the "Foul Anchor," as the inn, where Fid and Nightingale had so nearly come to blows, was called, scrupulously closed his doors at eight; a sort of expiation, by which he endeavoured to atone, while he slept, for any moral peccadillos that he might have committed during the day. Indeed, it was to be observed as a rule, that those who had the most difficulty in maintaining their good name, on the score of temperance and moderation, were the most rigid in withdrawing, in season, from the daily cares of the world. The Admiral's widow had given no little scandal, in her time, because lights were so often seen burning in her house long after the hour prescribed by custom for their extinction. Indeed, there were several other little particulars in which this good lady had rendered herself obnoxious to the whispered remarks of some of her female visitors. An Episcopalian herself, she was always observed to be employed with her needle on the evenings of Saturdays, though by no means distinguished for her ordinary industry. It was, however, a sort of manner the good lady had of exhibiting her adherence to the belief that the night of Sunday was the orthodox evening of the Sabbath. On this subject there was, in truth, a species of silent warfare between herself and the wife of the principal clergyman of the town. It resulted, happily, in no very striking marks of hostility. The latter was content to retaliate, by bringing her work, on the evenings of Sundays, to the house of the dowager, and occasionally interrupting their discourse, by a diligent application of the needle for some five or six minutes at a time. Against this contamination Mrs de Lacey took no other precaution than to play with the leaves of a prayer book, precisely on the principle that one



uses holy water to keep the devil at that distance which the Church has considered safest for its proselytes.

Let these matters be as they would, by ten o'clock on the night of the day our tale commences, the town of Newport was as still as though it did not contain a living soul. Watchmen there were none; for roguery had not yet begun to thrive openly in the provinces. When, therefore, Wilder and his two companions issued, at that hour, from their place of retirement into the empty streets, they found them as still as if man had never trod there. Not a candle was to be seen, nor the smallest evidence of human life to be heard. It would seem our adventurers knew their errand well; for, instead of knocking up any of the drowsy publicans to demand admission, they held their way steadily to the water's side; Wilder leading, Fid coming next, and Scipio, in conformity to all usage, bringing up the rear, in his ordinary, quiet, submissive manner.

At the margin of the water they found several small boats, moored under the shelter of a neighbouring wharf. Wilder gave his companions their directions, and walked to a place convenient for embarking. After waiting the necessary time, the bows of two boats came to the land at the same moment, one of which was governed by the hands of the negro, and the other by those of Fid.

"How's this?" demanded Wilder; "Is not one enough? There is some mistake between you."

"No mistake at all," responded Dick, suffering his oar to float on its blade, and running his fingers into his hair, as if he was content with his achievement; "no more mistake than there is in taking the sun on a clear day and in smooth water. Guinea is in the boat you hired; but a bad bargain you made of it, as I thought at the time; and so, as better late than never' is my rule, I have just been



casting an eye over all the craft; if this is not the tightest and fastest rowing clipper of them all, then am I no judge; and yet the parish priest would tell you, if he were here, that my father was a boat-builder, ay, and swear it too; that is to say, if you paid him well for the same."

"Fellow," returned Wilder, angrily, "you will one day induce me to turn you adrift. Return the boat to the place where you found it, and see it secured in the same manner as before."

"Turn me adrift!" deliberately repeated Fid, "that would be cutting all your weather lanyards at one blow, master Harry. Little good would come of Scipio Africa and you, after I should part company. Have you ever fairly logg'd the time we have sailed together?"

"Ay, have I; but it is possible to break even a friendship of twenty years."

"Saving your presence, master Harry, I'll be d——d if I believe any such thing. Here is Guinea, who is no better than a nigger, and therein far from being a fitting messmate to a white man; but, being used to look at his black face for four-and-twenty years, d'ye see, the colour has got into my eye, and now it suits as well as another. Then, at sea, in a dark night, it is not so easy a matter to tell the difference. No, no, I am not tired of you yet, master Harry; and it is no trifle that shall part us."

"Then, abandon your habit of making free with the property of others."

"I abandon nothing. No man can say he ever knowed me to quit a deck while a plank stuck to the beams; and shall I abandon, as you call it, my rights? What is the mighty matter, that all hands must be called to see an old sailor punished? You gave a lubberly fisherman, a fellow who has never been in deeper water than his own line will sound, you gave him, I say, a glittering spaniard, just for the



use of a bit of a skiff for the night, or, mayhap, for a small reach into the morning. Well, what does Dick do? He says to himself—for d——e if he's any blab to run round a ship grumbling at his officer—so, he just says to himself, 'That's too much;' and he looks about, to find the worth of it in some of the fisherman's neighbours. Money can be eaten; and, what is better, it may be drunk; therefore, it is not to be pitched overboard with the cook's ashes. I'll warrant me, if the truth could be fairly come by, it would be found, that, as to the owners of this here yawl, and that there skiff, their mothers are cousins, and that the dollar will go in snuff and strong drink among the whole family—so, no great harm done, after all."

Wilder made an impatient gesture to the other to obey, and walked up the bank, while he had time to comply. Fid never disputed a positive and distinct order, though he often took so much discretionary latitude in executing those which were less precise. He did not hesitate, therefore, to return the boat; but he did not carry his subordination so far as to do it without complaint. When this act of justice was performed, Wilder entered the skiff; and, seeing that his companions were seated at their oars, he bade them to pull down the harbour, admonishing them, at the same time, to make as little noise as possible.

"The night I rowed you into Louisbourg, a-reconnoitring," said Fid, thrusting his left hand into his bosom, while, with his right, he applied sufficient force to the light oar to make the skiff glide swiftly over the water—"that night we muffled every thing, even to our tongues. When there is occasion to put stoppers on the mouths of a boat's crew, why, I'm not the man to gainsay it; but, as I am one of them that thinks tongues were just as much made to talk with, as the sea was made to live on, I uphold rational



conversation in sober society. "S'ip, you Guinea, where are you shoving the skiff to? hereaway lies the island, and you are for going into yonder bit of a church."

"Lay on your oars," interrupted Wilder; "let the boat drift by this vessel."

They were now in the act of passing the ship, which had been warping from the wharfs to an anchorage, and in which the young sailor had so clandestinely heard that Mrs Wyllys and the fascinating Gertrude were to embark, on the following morning, for the distant province of Carolina. As the skiff floated past, Wilder examined the vessel, by the dim light of the stars, with a seaman's eye. No part of her hull, her spars, or her rigging, escaped his notice; and, when the whole became confounded, by the distance, in one dark mass of shapeless matter, he leaned his head over the side of his little bark, and mused long and deeply with himself. To this abstraction Fid presumed to offer no interruption. It had the appearance of professional duty; a subject that, in his eyes, was endowed with a species of character that might be called sacred. Scipio was habitually silent. After losing many minutes in this manner, Wilder suddenly regained his recollection, and abruptly observed,—

"It is a tall ship, and one that should make a long chase!"

"That's as may be," returned the ready Fid. "Should that fellow get a free wind, and his canvas all abroad, it might worry a King's cruiser to get nigh enough to throw the iron on his decks; but jamm'd up close hauled, why, I'd engage to lay on his weather quarter, with the saucy He—"

"Boys," interrupted Wilder, "it is now proper that you should know something of my future movements. We have been shipmates, I might almost say messmates, for more than twenty years. I was



no better than an infant, Fid, when you brought me to the commander of your ship, and not only was instrumental in saving my life, but in putting me into a situation to make an officer."

"Ay, ay, you were no great matter, master Harry as to bulk; and a short hammock served your turn as well as the captain's birth."

"I owe you a heavy debt, Fid, for that one generous act, and something, I may add, for your steady adherence to me since."

"Why, yes, I've been pretty steady in my conduct, master Harry, in this here business, more particularly, seeing that I have never let go my grapplings, though you've so often sworn to turn me adrift. As for Guinea, here, the chap makes fair weather with you, blow high or blow low, whereas it is no hard matter to get up a squall between us, as might be seen in that small affair about the boat;"—

"Say no more of it," interrupted Wilder, whose feelings appeared sensibly touched, as his recollections ran over long-past and bitterly-remembered scenes: "You know that little else than death can part us, unless indeed you choose to quit me now. It is right that you should know that I am engaged in a desperate pursuit, and one that may easily end in ruin to myself and all who accompany me. I feel reluctant to separate from you, my friends, for it may be a final parting, but, at the same time, you should know all the danger."

"Is there much more travelling by land?" bluntly demanded Fid.

"No; the duty, such as it is, will be done entirely on the water."

"Then bring forth your ship's books, and find room for such a mark as a pair of crossed anchors, which stand for all the same as so many letters reading Richard Fid.'"



"But perhaps, when you know"——

"I want to know nothing about it, master Harry. Haven't I sailed with you often enough under sealed orders, to trust my old body once more in your company, without forgetting my duty? What say you, Guinea? will you ship? or shall we land you at once, on yonder bit of a low point, and leave you to scrape acquaintance with the clams?"

"'Em berry well off, here," muttered the perfectly contented negro.

"Ay, ay, Guinea is like the launch of one of the coasters, always towing in your wake, master Harry; whereas I am often luffing athwart your hawse, or getting foul, in some fashion or other, on one of your quarters. Howsomever, we are both shipped, as you see, in this here cruise, with the particulars of which we are both well satisfied. So pass the word among us, what is to be done next, and no more parley."

"Remember the cautions you have already received," returned Wilder, who saw that the devotion of his followers was too infinite to need quickening, and who knew, from long and perilous experience, how implicitly he might rely on their fidelity, notwithstanding certain failings, that were perhaps peculiar to their condition; "remember what I have already given in charge; and now pull directly for yon ship in the outer harbour."

Fid and the black promptly complied; and the boat was soon skimming the water between the little island and what might, by comparison, be called the main. As they approached the vessel, the strokes of the oars were moderated, and finally abandoned altogether, Wilder preferring to let the skiff drop down with the tide upon the object he wished well to examine before venturing to board.

"Has not that ship her nettings triced to the rigging?" he demanded, in a voice that was lowered to



the tones necessary to escape observation, and which betrayed, at the same time, the interest he took in the reply.

"According to my sight, she has," returned Fid; "your slavers are a little pricked by conscience, and are never over-bold, unless when they are chasing a young nigger on the coast of Congo. Now, there is about as much danger of a Frenchman's looking in here to-night, with this land breeze and clear sky, as there is of my being made Lord High Admiral of England; a thing not likely to come to pass soon, seeing that the King don't know a great deal of my merit."

"They are, to a certainty, ready to give a warm reception to any boarders!" continued Wilder, who rarely paid much attention to the amplifications with which Fid so often saw fit to embellish the discourse. "It would be no easy matter to carry a ship thus prepared, if her people were true to themselves."

"I warrant ye there is a full quarter-watch at least sleeping among her guns, at this very moment, with a bright look-out from her cat-heads and taffrail. I was once on the weather fore-yard-arm of the Hebe, when I made, hereaway to the south-west, a sail coming large upon us,"—

"Hist! they are stirring on her decks!"

"To be sure they are. The cook is splitting a log; the captain has sung out for his night-cap."

The voice of Fid was lost in a summons from the ship, that sounded like the roaring of some sea monster, which had unexpectedly raised its head above the water. The practised ears of our adventurers instantly comprehended it to be, what it truly was, the manner in which it was not unusual to hail a boat. Without taking time to ascertain that the plashing of oars was to be heard in the distance. Wilder raised his form in the skiff, and answered.

"How now?" exclaimed the same strange voice;



"there is no one victualled aboard here that speaks thus. Whereaway are you, he that answers?"

"A little on your larboard bow; here, in the shadow of the ship."

"And what are ye about, within the sweep of my hawse?"

"Cutting the waves with my taffrail," returned Wilder, after a moment's hesitation.

"What fool has broke adrift here!" muttered his interrogator. "Pass a blunderbuss forward, and let us see if a civil answer can't be drawn from the fellow."

"Hold!" said a calm but authoritative voice from the most distant part of the ship; "it is as it should be; let them approach."

The man in the bows of the vessel bade them come along side, and then the conversation ceased. Wilder had now an opportunity to discover, that, as the hail had been intended for another boat, which was still at a distance, he had answered prematurely. But, perceiving that it was too late to retreat with safety, or perhaps only acting in conformity to his original determination, he directed his companions to obey.

"'Cutting the waves with the taffrail,' is not the civillest answer a man can give to a hail," muttered Fid, as he dropped the blade of his oar into the water; "nor is it a matter to be logged in a man's memory, that they have taken offence at the same. Howsomever, master Harry, if they are so minded as to make a quarrel about the thing, give them as good as they send, and count on manly backers."

No reply was made to this encouraging assurance; for, by this time, the skiff was within a few feet of the ship. Wilder ascended the side of the vessel amid a deep, and, as he felt it to be, an ominous silence. The night was dark, though enough light fell from the stars, that were here and there visible, to render



objects sufficiently distinct to the practised eyes of a seaman. When our young adventurer touched the deck, he cast a hurried and scrutinizing look about him, as if doubts and impressions, which had long been harboured, were all to be resolved by that first view.

An ignorant landsman would have been struck with the order and symmetry with which the tall spars rose towards the heavens, from the black mass of the hull, and with the rigging that hung in the air, one dark line crossing another, until all design seemed confounded in the confusion and intricacy of the studied maze. But to Wilder these familiar objects furnished no immediate attraction. His first rapid glance had, like that of all seamen, it is true, been thrown upward, but it was instantly succeeded by the brief, though keen, examination to which we have just alluded. With the exception of one who, though his form was muffled in a large sea-cloak, seemed to be an officer, not a living creature was to be seen on the decks. On either side there was a dark, frowning battery, arranged in the beautiful and imposing order of marine architecture; but nowhere could he find a trace of the crowd of human beings which usually throng the deck of an armed ship, or that was necessary to render the engines effective. It might be that her people were in their hammocks, as usual at that hour, but still it was customary to leave a sufficient number on the watch, to look to the safety of the vessel. Finding himself so unexpectedly confronted with a single individual, our adventurer began to be sensible of the awkwardness of his situation, and of the necessity of some explanation.

“You are no doubt surprised, sir,” he said, “at the lateness of the hour that I have chosen for my visit.”



"You were certainly expected earlier," was the laconic answer.

"Expected!"

"Ay, expected. Have I not seen you, and your two companions who are in the boat, reconnoitring us half the day, from the wharfs of the town, and even from the old tower on the hill? What did all this curiosity foretel, but an intention to come on board?"

"This is odd, I will acknowledge!" exclaimed Wilder, in some secret alarm. "And, then, you had notice of my intentions?"

"Hark ye, friend," interrupted the other, indulging in a short, low laugh; "from your outfit and appearance, I think I am right in calling you a seaman: Do you imagine that glasses were forgotten in the inventory of this ship? or, do you fancy that we don't know how to use them?"

"You must have strong reasons for looking so deeply into the movements of strangers on the land."

"Hum! Perhaps we expect our cargo from the country. But I suppose you have not come so far in the dark to look at our manifest. You would see the Captain?"

"Do I not see him?"

"Where?" demanded the other, with a start that manifested he stood in a salutary awe of his superior.

"In yourself."

"I! I have not got so high in the books, though my time may come yet, some fair day. Hark ye, friend; you passed under the stern of yonder ship, which has been hauling into the stream, in coming out to us?"

"Certainly; she lies, as you see, directly in my course."

"A wholesome-looking craft that! and one well



found, I warrant you. She is quite ready to be off, they tell me."

"It would so seem: her sails are bent, and she floats like a ship that is full."

"Of what?" abruptly demanded the other.

"Of articles mentioned in her manifest, no doubt. But you seem light yourself: if you are to load at this port, it will be some days before you put to sea."

"Hum! I don't think we shall be long after our neighbour," the other remarked, a little drily. Then, as if he might have said too much, he added hastily, "We slavers carry little else, you know, than our shackles and a few extra tierces of rice; the rest of our ballast is made up of these guns, and the stuff to put into them."

"And is it usual for ships in the trade to carry so heavy an armament?"

"Perhaps it is, perhaps not. To own the truth, there is not much law on the coast, and the strong arm often does as much as the right. Our owners, therefore, I believe, think it quite as well there should be no lack of guns and ammunition on board."

"They should also give you people to work them."

"They have forgotten that part of their wisdom, certainly."

His words were nearly drowned by the same gruff voice that had brought to the skiff of Wilder, which sent another hoarse summons across the water, rolling out sounds that were intended to say,—

"Boat, ahoy!"

The answer was quick, short, and nautical; but it was rendered in a low and cautious tone. The individual, with whom Wilder had been holding such equivocating parlance, seemed embarrassed by the sudden interruption, and a little at a loss to know how to conduct himself. He had already made a motion towards leading his visiter to the cabin, when



the sounds of oars were heard clattering in a boat along side of the ship, announcing that he was too late. Bidding the other remain where he was, he sprang to the gangway, in order to receive those who had just arrived.

By this sudden desertion, Wilder found himself in entire possession of that part of the vessel where he stood. It gave him a better opportunity to renew his examination, and to cast a scrutinizing eye also over the new comers.

Some five or six athletic-looking seamen ascended from the boat, in profound silence. A short and whispered conference took place between them and their officer, who appeared both to receive a report, and to communicate an order. When these preliminary matters were ended, a line was lowered, from a whip on the main-yard, the end evidently dropping into the newly-arrived boat. In a moment, the burthen it was intended to transfer to the ship was seen swinging in the air, midway between the water and the spar. It then slowly descended, inclining in-board, until it was safely, and somewhat carefully, landed on the decks of the vessel.

During the whole of this process, which in itself had nothing extraordinary or out of the daily practice of large vessels in port, Wilder had strained his eyes, until they appeared nearly ready to start from their sockets. The black mass, which had been lifted from the boat, seemed, while it lay against the back-ground of sky, to possess the proportions of the human form. The seamen gathered about this object. After much bustle, and a good deal of low conversation, the burthen or body, whichever it might be called, was raised by the men, and the whole disappeared together, behind the masts, boats, and guns which crowded the forward part of the vessel.

The whole event was of a character to attract



the attention of Wilder. His eye was not, however, so intently riveted on the groupe in the gangway, as to prevent his detecting a dozen black objects, that were suddenly thrust forward, from behind the spars and other dark masses of the vessel. They might be blocks swinging in the air, but they bore also a wonderful resemblance to human heads. The simultaneous manner in which they both appeared and disappeared, served to confirm this impression; nor, to confess the truth, had our adventurer any doubt that curiosity had drawn so many inquiring countenances from their respective places of concealment. He had not much leisure, however, to reflect on all these little accompaniments of his situation, before he was rejoined by his former companion, who, to all appearance, was again left, with himself, to the entire possession of the deck.

"You know the trouble of getting off the people from the shore," the officer observed, "when a ship is ready to sail."

"You seem to have a summary method of hoisting them in," returned Wilder.

"Ah! you speak of the fellow on the whip? Your eyes are good, friend, to tell a jack-knife from a marling-spike, at this distance. But the lad was mutinous; that is, not absolutely mutinous—but, drunk. As mutinous as a man can well be, who can neither speak, sit, nor stand."

Then, as if as well content with his humour as with this simple explanation, the other laughed and chuckled, in a manner that showed he was in perfect good humour with himself.

"But all this time you are left on deck," he quickly added, "and the Captain is waiting your appearance in the cabin: Follow; I will be your pilot."

"Hold," said Wilder; "will it not be as well to announce my visit?"

"He knows it already: Little takes place aboard,

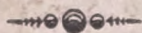


here, that does not reach his ears before it gets into the log-book."

Wilder made no further objection, but indicated his readiness to proceed. The other led the way to the bulkhead which separated the principal cabin from the quarter-deck of the ship; and, pointing to a door, he rather whispered than said aloud,—

"Tap twice; if he answer, go in."

Wilder did as he was directed. His first summons was either unheard or disregarded. On repeating it, he was bid to enter. The young seaman opened the door, with a crowd of sensations, that will find their solution in the succeeding parts of our narrative, and instantly stood, under the light of a powerful lamp, in the presence of the stranger in green.



## CHAPTER VI.

—— "The good old plan,  
That they should get, who have the power,  
And they should keep, who can."—*Wordsworth.*

THE apartment, in which our adventurer now found himself, afforded no bad illustration of the character of its occupant. In its form, and proportions, it was a cabin of the usual size and arrangements; but, in its furniture and equipments, it exhibited a singular admixture of luxury and martial preparation. The lamp, which swung from the upper deck, was of solid silver; and, though adapted to its present situation by mechanical ingenuity, there was that, in its shape and ornaments, which betrayed it had once been used before some shrine of a far more sacred character. Massive candlesticks, of the same precious metal, and which partook of the same ecclesiastical formation, were on a venerable table, whose mahogany was glittering with



the polish of half a century, and whose gilded claws, and carved supporters, bespoke an original destination very different from the ordinary service of a ship. A couch, covered with cut velvet, stood along the transom; while a divan, of blue silk, lay against the bulkhead opposite, manifesting, by its fashion, its materials, and its piles of pillows, that even Asia had been made to contribute to the ease of its luxurious owner. In addition to these prominent articles, there were cut glass, mirrors, plate, and even hangings; each of which, by something peculiar in its fashion or materials, bespoke an origin different from that of its neighbour. In short, splendour and elegance seemed to have been much more consulted than propriety, or conformity in taste, in the selection of most of those articles, which had been, oddly enough, made to contribute to the caprice or to the comfort of their singular possessor.

In the midst of this medley of wealth and luxury, appeared the frowning appendages of war. The cabin included four of those dark cannon whose weight and number had been first to catch the attention of Wilder. Notwithstanding they were placed in such close proximity to the articles of ease just enumerated, it only needed a seaman's eye to perceive that they stood ready for instant service, and that five minutes of preparation would strip the place of all its tinsel, and leave it a warm and well protected battery. Pistols, sabres, half-pikes, boarding-axes, and all the minor implements of marine warfare, were arranged about the cabin in such a manner as to aid in giving it an appearance of wild embellishment, while, at the same time, each was convenient to the hand.

Around the mast was placed a stand of muskets; and strong wooden bars, that were evidently made to fit in brackets on either side of the door, sufficiently showed that the bulkhead might easily be



converted into a barrier. The entire arrangement proclaimed that the cabin was considered the citadel of the ship. In support of this latter opinion, appeared a hatch, which evidently communicated with the apartments of the inferior officers, and which also opened a direct passage into the magazine. These dispositions, a little different from what he had been accustomed to see, instantly struck the eye of Wilder, though leisure was not then given to reflect on their uses and objects.

There was a latent expression of satisfaction, something modified, perhaps, by irony, on the countenance of the stranger in green, (for he was still clad as when first introduced to the reader,) as he arose, on the entrance of his visiter. The two stood several moments without speaking, when the pretended barrister saw fit to break the awkward silence.

"To what happy circumstance is this ship indebted for the honour of such a visit?" he demanded.

"I believe I may answer, To the invitation of her Captain," Wilder answered, with a steadiness and calmness equal to that displayed by the other.

"Did he show you his commission, in assuming that office? They say, at sea, I believe, that no cruiser should be found without a commission."

"And what say they at the universities on this material point?"

"I see I may as well lay aside my gown, and own the marling-spike!" returned the other, smiling.

"There is something about the trade—*profession*, though, I believe, is your favourite word—there is something about the profession, which betrays us to each other. Yes, Mr Wilder," he added with dignity, motioning to his guest to imitate his example, and take a seat, "I am, like yourself, a seaman bred; and happy am I to add, the Commander of this gallant vessel."



"Then, must you admit that I have not intruded without a sufficient warrant."

"I confess the same. My ship has filled your eye agreeably; nor shall I be slow to acknowledge, that I have seen enough about your air, and person, to make me wish to be an older acquaintance. You want service?"

"One should be ashamed of idleness in these stirring times."

"It is well. This is an oddly-constructed world in which we live, Mr Wilder! Some think themselves in danger, with a foundation beneath them no less solid than *terra firma*, while others are content to trust their fortunes on the sea. So, again, some there are who believe praying is the business of man; and then come others who are sparing of their breath, and take those favours for themselves which they have not always the leisure or the inclination to ask for. No doubt you thought it prudent to inquire into the nature of our trade, before you came hither in quest of employment?"

"You are said to be a slaver, among the townsmen of Newport."

"They are never wrong, your village gossips! If witchcraft ever truly existed on earth, the first of the cunning tribe has been a village innkeeper; the second, its doctor; and the third, its priest. The right to the fourth honour may be disputed between the barber and the tailor.—Roderick!"

The Captain accompanied the word by which he so unceremoniously interrupted himself, by striking a light blow on a Chinese gong, which, among other curiosities, was suspended from one of the beams of the upper deck, within reach of his hand.

"I say, Roderick, do you sleep?"

A light and active boy darted out of one of the two little state-rooms which were constructed on



the quarters of the ship, and answered to the summons by announcing his presence.

"Has the boat returned?"

The reply was in the affirmative.

"And has she been successful?"

"The General is in his room, sir, and can give you an answer better than I."

"Then, let the General appear, and report the result of his campaign."

Wilder was by far too deeply interested, to break the sudden reverie into which his companion had now evidently fallen, even by breathing as loud as usual. The boy descended through the hatch like a serpent gliding into his hole, or, rather, a fox darting into his burrow, and then a profound stillness reigned in the cabin. The Commander of the ship leaned his head on his hand, appearing utterly unconscious of the presence of any stranger. The silence might have been of much longer duration, had it not been interrupted by the appearance of a third person. A straight, rigid form slowly elevated itself through the little hatchway, very much in the manner that theatrical spectres are seen to make their appearance on the stage, until about half of the person was visible, when it ceased to rise, and turned its disciplined countenance on the Captain.

"I wait for orders," said a mumbling voice, which issued from lips that were hardly perceived to move.

Wilder started as this unexpected individual appeared; nor was the stranger wanting in an aspect sufficiently remarkable to produce surprise in any spectator. The face was that of a man of fifty, with the lineaments rather indurated than faded by time. Its colour was an uniform red, with the exception of one of those expressive little fibrous tell-tales on each cheek, which bear so striking a resemblance to the



mazes of the vine, and which would seem to be the true origin of the proverb which says that "good wine needs no bush." The head was bald on its crown; but around either ear was a mass of grizzled hair, pomatumed and combed into formal military bristles. The neck was long, and supported by a black stock; the shoulders, arms, and body were those of a man of tall stature; and the whole were enveloped in an over-coat, which, though it had something methodical in its fashion, was evidently intended as a sort of domino. The Captain raised his head as the other spoke, exclaiming,—

"Ah! General, are you at your post? Did you find the land?"

"Yes."

"And the point?—and the man?"

"Both."

"And what did you?"

"Obey orders."

"That was right.—You are a jewel for an executive officer, General; and, as such, I wear you near my heart. Did the fellow complain?"

"He was gagged."

"A summary method of closing remonstrance. It is as it should be, General; as usual, you have merited my approbation."

"Then reward me for it."

"In what manner? You are already as high in rank as I can elevate you. The next step must be knighthood."

"Pshaw! my men are no better than militia. They want coats."

"They shall have them. His Majesty's guards shall not be half so well equipt. General, I wish you a good night."

The figure descended, in the same rigid, spectral manner as it had risen on the sight, leaving Wilder again alone with the Captain of the ship. The lat-



ter seemed suddenly struck with the fact that this odd interview had occurred in the presence of one who was nearly a stranger, and that, in his eyes at least, it might appear to require some explanation.

"My friend," he said, with an air something explanatory, while it was at the same time not a little haughty, "commands what, in a more regular cruiser, would be called the 'marine guard.' He has gradually risen, by service, from the rank of a subaltern, to the high station which he now fills. You perceive he smells of the camp?"

"More than of the ship. Is it usual for slavers to be so well provided with military equipments? I find you armed at all points."

"You would know more of us, before we proceed to drive our bargain?" the Captain answered, with a smile. He then opened a little casket that stood on the table, and drew from it a parchment, which he coolly handed to Wilder, saying, as he did so, with one of the quick, searching glances of his restless eye, "You will see, by that, we have 'letters of marque,' and are duly authorized to fight the battles of the King, while we are conducting our own more peaceable affairs."

"This is the commission of a brig!"

"True, true. I have given you the wrong paper. I believe you will find this more accurate."

"This is truly a commission for the 'good ship Seven Sisters;' but you surely carry more than ten guns, and, then, these in your cabin throw nine instead of four pound shot!"

"Ah! you are as precise as though you had been the barrister, and I the blundering seaman. I dare say you have heard of such a thing as stretching a commission," continued the Captain drily, as he carelessly threw the parchment back among a pile of similar documents. Then, rising from his seat, he began to pace the cabin with quick steps, as he



continued, "I need not tell you, Mr Wilder, that ours is a hazardous pursuit. Some call it lawless. But, as I am little addicted to theological disputes, we will wave the question. You have not come here without knowing your errand."

"I am in search of a birth."

"Doubtless you have reflected well on the matter and know your own mind as to the trade in which you would sail. In order that no time may be wasted, and that our dealings may be frank, as becomes two honest seamen, I will confess to you, at once, that I have need of you. A brave and skilful man, one older, though, I dare say, not better than yourself, occupied that larboard state-room, within the month; but, poor fellow, he is food for fishes ere this."

"He was drowned?"

"Not he! He died in open battle with a King's ship!"

"A King's ship! Have you then stretched your commission so far as to find a warranty for giving battle to his Majesty's cruisers?"

"Is there no King but George the Second! Perhaps she bore the white flag, perhaps a Dane. But he was truly a gallant fellow; and there lies his birth, as empty as the day he was carried from it, to be cast into the sea. He was a man fit to succeed to the command, should an evil star shine on my fate. I think I could die easier, were I to know this noble vessel was to be transmitted to one who would make such use of her as should be."

"Doubtless your owners would provide a successor, in the event of such a calamity."

"My owners are very reasonable," returned the other, with a meaning smile, while he cast another searching glance at his guest, which compelled Wilder to lower his own eyes to the cabin floor; "they seldom trouble me with importunities, or orders."



“They are indulgent! I see that flags were not forgotten in your inventory: Do they also give you permission to wear any one of all those ensigns, as you may please?”

As this question was put, the expressive and understanding looks of the two seamen met. The Captain drew a flag from the half-open locker, where it had caught the attention of his visiter, and, letting the roll unfold itself on the deck, he answered,—

“This is the Lily of France, you see. No bad emblem of your stainless Frenchman. An escutcheon of pretence without spot, but, nevertheless, a little soiled by too much use. Here, you have the calculating Dutchman; plain, substantial, and cheap. It is a flag I little like. If the ship be of value, her owners are not often willing to dispose of her without a price. This is your swaggering Hamburger. He is rich in the possession of one town, and makes his boast of it, in these towers. Of the rest of his mighty possessions he wisely says nothing in his allegory. These are the Crescents of Turkey; a moon-struck nation, that believe themselves the inheritors of heaven. Let them enjoy their birthright in peace; it is seldom they are found looking for its blessings on the high seas—and these, the little satellites that play about the mighty moon; your Barbarians of Africa. I hold but little communion with these wide-trowsered gentry, for they seldom deal in gainful traffic. And yet,” he added, glancing his eye at the silken divan before which Wilder was seated, “I have met the rascals; nor have we parted entirely without communication! Ah! here comes the man I like; your golden, gorgeous Spaniard! This field of yellow reminds one of the riches of her mines; and this Crown! one might fancy it of beaten gold, and stretch forth a hand to grasp the treasure. What a blazonry is this for a galleon! Here is the humbler Portuguese; and yet is he not with-



out a wealthy look. I have often fancied there were true Brazilian diamonds in this kingly bauble. Yonder crucifix, which you see hanging in pious proximity to my state-room door, is a specimen of the sort I mean." Wilder turned his head, to throw a look on the valuable emblem, that was really suspended from the bulkhead, within a few inches of the spot the other named. After satisfying his curiosity, he was in the act of giving his attention again to the flags, when he detected another of those penetrating, but stolen glances with which his companion so often read the countenance of his associates. It might have been that the Captain was endeavouring to discover the effect his profuse display of wealth had produced on the mind of his visiter. Let that be as it would, Wilder smiled; for, at that moment, the idea first occurred that the ornaments of the cabin had been thus studiously arranged with an expectation of his arrival, and with the wish that their richness might strike his senses favourably. The other caught the expression of his eye; and perhaps he mistook its meaning, when he suffered his construction of what it said to animate him to pursue his whimsical analysis of the flags, with an air still more cheerful and vivacious than before.

"These double-headed monsters are land birds, and seldom risk a flight over deep waters. They are not for me. Your hardy, valiant Dane; your sturdy Swede; a nest of smaller fry," he continued, passing his hand rapidly over a dozen little rolls as they lay, each in its own repository, "who spread their bunting like larger states; and your luxurious Neapolitan. Ah! here come the Keys of Heaven! This is a flag to die under! I lay yard-arm and yard-arm, once, under that very bit of bunting, with a heavy corsair from Algiers"—

"What! Did you choose to fight under the banners of the Church?"



"In mere devotion. I pictured to myself the surprise that would overcome the barbarian, when he should find that we did not go to prayers. We gave him but a round or two, before he swore that Allah had decreed he might surrender. There was a moment, while I luffed-up on his weather-quarter, I believe, that the Mussulman thought the whole of the holy Conclave was afloat, and that the downfall of Mahomet and his offspring was ordained. I provoked the conflict, I will confess, in showing him these peaceful Keys, which he is dull enough to think open half the strong boxes of Christendom."

"When he had confessed his error, you let him go?"

"Hum!—with my blessing. There was some interchange of commodities between us, and then we parted. I left him smoking his pipe, in a heavy sea, with his fore-topmast over the side, his mizzenmast under his counter, and some six or seven holes in his bottom, that let in the water just as fast as the pumps discharged it. You see he was in a fair way to acquire his portion of the inheritance. But Heaven had ordained it all, and he was satisfied!"

"And what flags are these which you have passed? They seem rich, and many."

"These are England; like herself, aristocratic, party-coloured, and a good deal touched by humour. Here is bunting to note all ranks and conditions, as if men were not made of the same flesh, and the people of one kingdom might not all sail honestly under the same emblems. Here is my Lord High Admiral; your St. George; your field of red, and of blue, as chance may give you a leader, or the humour of the moment prevail; the stripes of mother India, and the Royal Standard itself!"

"The Royal Standard!"

"Why not? a commander is termed a 'monarch in his ship.' Ay; this is the Standard of the King;



and, what is more, it has been worn in presence of an Admiral!"

"This needs explanation!" exclaimed his listener, who seemed to feel much that sort of horror that a churchman would discover at the detection of sacrilege. To wear the Royal Standard in presence of a flag! We all know how difficult, and even dangerous, it becomes, to sport a simple pennant, with the eyes of a King's cruiser on us—"

"I love to flaunt the rascals!" interrupted the other, with a smothered, but bitter laugh. "There is pleasure in the thing!—In order to punish, they must possess the power; an experiment often made, but never yet successful. You understand balancing accounts with the law, by showing a broad sheet of canvas! I need say no more."

"And which of all these flags do you most use?" demanded Wilder, after a moment of intense thought.

"As to mere sailing, I am as whimsical as a girl in her teens in the choice of her ribbons. I will often show you a dozen in a day. Many is the worthy trader who has gone into port with his veritable account of this Dutchman, or that Dane, with whom he has spoken in the offing. As to fighting, though I have been known to indulge a humour, too, in that particular, still is there one which I most affect."

"And that is?——"

The Captain kept his hand, for a moment, on the roll he had touched, and seemed to read the very soul of his visiter, so intent and keen was his look the while. Then, suffering the bunting to fall, a deep, blood-red field, without relief or ornament of any sort, unfolded itself, as he answered, with emphasis,—

"This."

"That is the colour of a Rover!"

"Ay, it is *red*! I like it better than your gloomy



fields of black, with death's heads, and other childish scare-crows. It threatens nothing ; but merely says, 'Such is the price at which I am to be bought.' Mr Wilder," he added, losing the mixture of irony and pleasantry with which he had supported the previous dialogue, in an air of authority, "We understand each other. It is time that each should sail under his proper colours. I need not tell you who I am."

"I believe it is unnecessary," said Wilder. "If I can comprehend these palpable signs, I stand in presence of—of—"

"The Red Rover," continued the other, observing that he hesitated to pronounce the appalling name. "It is true ; and I hope this interview is the commencement of a durable and firm friendship. I know not the secret cause, but, from the moment of our meeting, a strong and indefinable interest has drawn me towards you. Perhaps I felt the void which my situation has drawn about me ;—be that as it may, I receive you with a longing heart and open arms."

Though it must be very evident, from what preceded this open avowal, that Wilder was not ignorant of the character of the ship on board of which he had just ventured, yet did he not receive the acknowledgment without embarrassment. The reputation of this renowned freebooter, his daring, his acts of liberality and licentiousness so frequently blended, and his desperate disregard of life on all occasions, were probably crowding together in the recollection of our more youthful adventurer, and caused him to feel that species of responsible hesitation, to which we are all more or less subject on the occurrence of important events, be they ever so much expected.

"You have not mistaken my purpose, or my suspicions," he at length answered, "for I own I have



come in search of this very ship. I accept the service; and, from this moment, you will rate me in whatever station you may think me best able to discharge my duty with credit."

"You are next to myself. In the morning, the same shall be proclaimed on the quarter-deck; and, in the event of my death, unless I am deceived in my man, you will prove my successor. This may strike you as sudden confidence. It is so, in part, I must acknowledge; but our shipping lists cannot be opened, like those of the King, by beat of drum in the streets of the metropolis; and, then, am I no judge of the human heart, if my frank reliance on your faith does not, in itself, strengthen your good feelings in my favour."

"It does!" exclaimed Wilder, with sudden and deep emphasis.

The Rover smiled calmly, as he continued,—

"Young gentlemen of your years are apt to carry no small portion of their hearts in their hands. But, notwithstanding this seeming sympathy, in order that you may have sufficient respect for the discretion of your leader, it is necessary that I should say we have met before. I was apprised of your intention to seek me out, and to offer to join me."

"It is impossible!" cried Wilder, "No human being—"

"Can ever be certain his secrets are safe," interrupted the other, "when he carries a face as ingenuous as your own. It is but four-and-twenty hours since you were in the good town of Boston."

"I admit that much; but—"

"You will soon admit the rest. You were too curious in your inquiries of the dolt who declares he was robbed by us of his provisions and sails. The false-tongued villain! It may be well for him to keep from my path, or he may get a lesson that shall prick his honesty. Does he think such pitiful game as he



would induce me to spread a single inch of canvas, or even to lower a boat into the sea !”

“Is not his statement, then, true?” demanded Wilder, in a surprise he took no pains to conceal.

“True ! Am I what report has made me ? Look keenly at the monster, that nothing may escape you,” returned the Rover, with a hollow laugh, in which scorn struggled to keep down the feelings of wounded pride. “Where are the horns, and the cloven foot ? Snuff the air : Is it not tainted with sulphur ? But enough of this. I knew of your inquiries, and liked your mien. In short, you were my study ; and, though my approaches were made with some caution, they were sufficiently nigh to effect the object. You pleased me, Wilder ; and I hope the satisfaction may be mutual.”

The newly engaged buccanier bowed to the compliment of his superior, and appeared at some little loss for a reply : As if to get rid of the subject at once, he hurriedly observed,—

“As we now understand each other, I will intrude no longer, but leave you for the night, and return to my duty in the morning.”

“Leave me !” returned the Rover, stopping short in his walk, and fastening his eye keenly on the other. “It is not usual for my officers to leave me at this hour. A sailor should love his ship, and never sleep out of her, unless on compulsion.”

“We may as well understand each other,” said Wilder, quickly. “If it is to be a slave, and, like one of the bolts, a fixture in the vessel, that you need me, our bargain is at an end.”

“Hum ! I admire your spirit, sir, much more than your discretion. You will find me an attached friend, and one who little likes a separation, however short. Is there not enough to content you here ? I will not speak of such low considerations as those which administer to the ordinary appetites. But, you have



been taught the value of reason ; here are books—you have taste ; here is elegance—you are poor ; here is wealth."

"They amount to nothing, without liberty," coldly returned the other.

"And what is this liberty you ask ? I hope, young man, you would not so soon betray the confidence you have just received ! Our acquaintance is but short, and I may have been too hasty in my faith."

"I must return to the land," Wilder added, firmly, "if it be only to know that I am intrusted, and am not a prisoner."

"There is generous sentiment, or deep villany, in all this," resumed the Rover, after a minute of deep thought. "I will believe the former. Declare to me, that, while in the town of Newport, you will inform no soul of the true character of this ship."

"I will swear it," eagerly interrupted Wilder.

"On this cross," rejoined the Rover, with a sarcastic laugh ; "on this diamond-mounted cross ! No, sir," he added, with a proud curl of the lip, as he cast the jewel contemptuously aside, "oaths are made for men who need laws to keep them to their promises ; I need no more than the clear and unequivocal affirmation of a gentleman."

"Then, plainly and unequivocally do I declare, that, while in Newport, I will discover the character of this ship to no one, without your wish, or order so to do. Nay more"—

"No more. It is wise to be sparing of our pledges, and to say no more than the occasion requires. The time may come when you might do good to yourself, without harming me, by being unfettered by a promise. In an hour, you shall land ; that time will be needed to make you acquainted with the terms of your enlistment, and to grace my rolls with your



name.—Roderick," he added, again touching the gong, "you are wanted, boy."

The same active lad, that had made his appearance at the first summons, ran up the steps from the cabin beneath, and announced his presence again by his voice.

"Roderick," continued the Rover, "this is my future lieutenant, and, of course, your officer, and my friend. Will you take refreshment, sir? there is little, that man needs, which Roderick cannot supply."

"I thank you; I have need of none."

"Then, have the goodness to follow the boy. He will show you into the dining apartment beneath, and give you the written regulations. In an hour, you will have digested the code, and by that time I shall be with you. Throw the light more upon the ladder, boy; you can descend *without* a ladder though, it would seem, or I should not, at this moment, have the pleasure of your company."

The intelligent smile of the Rover was unanswered by any corresponding evidence from the subject of his joke, that he found satisfaction in the remembrance of the awkward situation in which he had been left in the tower. The former caught the displeased expression of the other's countenance, as he gravely prepared to follow the boy, who already stood in the hatchway with a light. Advancing a step, with the grace and tones of sensitive breeding, he said quickly,—

"Mr Wilder, I owe you an apology for my seeming rudeness at parting on the hill. Though I believed you mine, I was not sure of my acquisition. You will readily see how necessary it might be, to one in my situation, to throw off a companion at such a moment."

Wilder turned, with a countenance from which



every shade of displeasure had vanished, and motioned to him to say no more.

"It was awkward enough, certainly, to find one's self in such a prison; but I feel the justice of what you say. I might have done the very thing myself, if the same presence of mind were at hand to help me."

"The good man, who grinds in the Newport ruin, must be in a sad way, since all the rats are leaving his mill," cried the Rover gaily, as his companion descended after the boy. Wilder now freely returned his open, cordial laugh, and then, as he descended, the cabin was left to him who, a few minutes before, had been found in its quiet possession.



## CHAPTER VII.

"The world affords no law to make thee rich;  
Then be not poor, but break it, and take this."

*Apoth.* "My poverty, but not my will, consents."

*Romeo and Juliet.*

THE Rover arrested his step, as the other disappeared, and stood for more than a minute in an attitude of high and self-gratulating triumph. It was quite apparent he was exulting in his success. But, though his intelligent face betrayed the satisfaction of the inward man, it was illumined by no expression of vulgar joy. It was the countenance of one who was suddenly relieved from intense care, rather than that of a man who was greedy of profiting by the services of others. Indeed, it would not have been difficult, for a close and practised observer, to have detected a shade of regret in the lightings of his seductive smile, or in the momentary flashes of his changeful eye. The feeling, however, quickly passed away, and his whole figure and countenance



resumed the ordinary easy mien in which he most indulged in his hours of retirement.

After allowing sufficient time for the boy to conduct Wilder to the necessary cabin, and to put him in possession of the regulations for the police of the ship, the Captain again touched the gong, and once more summoned the former to his presence. The lad had, however, to approach the elbow of his master, and to speak thrice, before the other was conscious that he had answered his call.

"Roderick," said the Rover, after a long pause, "are you there?"

"I am here," returned a low, and seemingly a mournful voice.

"Ah! you gave him the regulations?"

"I did."

"And he reads?"

"He reads."

"It is well. I would speak to the General. Roderick, you must have need of rest; good night; let the General be summoned to a council, and—Good night, Roderick."

The boy made an assenting reply; but, instead of springing, with his former alacrity, to execute the order, he lingered a moment nigh his master's chair. Failing, however, in his wish to catch his eye, he slowly and reluctantly descended the stairs which led into the lower cabins, and was seen no more.

It is needless to describe the manner in which the General made his second appearance. It differed in no particular from his former entrée, except that, on this occasion, the whole of his person was developed. He appeared a tall, upright form, that was far from being destitute of natural grace and proportions, but which had been so exquisitely drilled into simultaneous movement, that the several members had so far lost the power of volition, as to render it impossible for one to stir, without producing some-



thing like a correspondent demonstration in all its fellows. This rigid and well-regulated personage, after making a formal military bow to his superior, helped himself to a chair, in which, after some little time lost in preparation, he seated himself in silence. The Rover seemed conscious of his presence; for he acknowledged his salute by a gentle inclination of his own head; though he did not appear to think it necessary to suspend his ruminations the more on that account. At length, however, he turned short upon his companion, and said abruptly,—

“General, the campaign is not finished.”

“What remains? the field is won, and the enemy is a prisoner.”

“Ay, your part of the adventure is well achieved, but much of mine remains to be done. You saw the youth in the lower cabin?”

“I did.”

“And how find you his appearance?”

“Maritime.”

“That is as much as to say, you like him not.”

“I like discipline.”

“I am much mistaken if you do not find him to your taste on the quarter-deck. Let that be as it may, I have still a favour to ask of you!”

“A favour!—it is getting late.”

“Did I say ‘a favour?’ there is duty to be yet done.”

“I wait your orders.”

“It is necessary that we use great precaution; for, as you know”——

“I wait your orders,” laconically repeated the other.

The Rover compressed his mouth, and a scornful smile struggled about the nether lip; but it changed into a look half bland, half authoritative, as he continued,—

“You will find two seamen, in a skiff, alongside



the ship; the one is white, and the other is black. These men you will have conducted into the vessel—into one of the forward state-rooms—and you will have them both thoroughly intoxicated.”

“It shall be done,” returned he who was called the General, rising, and marching with long strides towards the door of the cabin.

“Pause a moment,” exclaimed the Rover; “what agent will you use?”

“Nightingale has the strongest head but one in the ship.”

“He is too far gone already. I sent him ashore, to look about for any straggling seamen who might like our service; and I found him in a tavern, with all the fastenings off his tongue, declaiming like a lawyer who had taken a fee from both parties. Besides, he had a quarrel with one of these very men, and it is probable they would get to blows in their cups.”

“I will do it myself. My night-cap is waiting for me; and it is only to lace it a little tighter than common.”

The Rover seemed content with this assurance; for he expressed his satisfaction with a familiar nod of the head. The soldier was now about to depart, when he was again interrupted.—

“One thing more, General; there is your captive.”—

“Shall I make him drunk too?”

“By no means. Let him be conducted hither.”

The General made an ejaculation of assent, and left the cabin. “It were weak,” thought the Rover, as he resumed his walk up and down the apartment, “to trust too much to an ingenuous face and youthful enthusiasm. I am deceived if the boy has not had reason to think himself disgusted with the world, and ready to embark in any romantic enterprise; but, still, to be deceived might be fatal; therefore



will I be prudent, even to excess of caution. He is tied in an extraordinary manner to these two seamen. I would I knew his history. But all that will come in proper time. The men must remain as hostages for his own return, and for his faith. If he prove false, why, they are seamen;—and many men are expended in this wild service of ours! It is well arranged; and no suspicion of any plot on our part will wound the sensitive pride of the boy, if he be, as I would gladly think, a true man.”

Such was, in a great manner, the train of thought in which the Rover indulged, for many minutes, after his military companion had left him. His lips moved; smiles, and dark shades of thought, in turn, chased each other from his speaking countenance, which betrayed all the sudden and violent changes that denote the workings of a busy spirit within. While thus engrossed in mind, his step became more rapid, and, at times, he gesticulated a little extravagantly, when he found himself, in a sudden turn, unexpectedly confronted by a form that seemed to rise on his sight like a vision.

While most engaged in his own humours, two powerful seamen had, unheeded, entered the cabin; and, after silently depositing a human figure in a seat, they withdrew without speaking. It was before this personage that the Rover now found himself. The gaze was mutual, long, and uninterrupted by a syllable from either party. Surprise and indecision held the Rover mute, while wonder and alarm appeared to have literally frozen the faculties of the other. At length the former, suffering a quaint and peculiar smile to gleam for a moment across his countenance, said abruptly,—

“I welcome sir Hector Homespun!”

The eyes of the confounded tailor—for it was no other than that garrulous acquaintance of the reader who had fallen into the toils of the Rover—the



eyes of the good-man rolled from right to left, embracing, in their wanderings, the medley of elegance and warlike preparation that they every where met, never failing to return, from each greedy look, to devour the figure that stood before him.

“I say, Welcome, sir Hector Homespun!” repeated the Rover.

“The Lord will be lenient to the sins of a miserable father of seven small children!” ejaculated the tailor. “It is but little, valiant Pirate, that can be gotten from a hard-working, upright tradesman, who sits from the rising to the setting sun, bent over his labour.”

“These are debasing terms for chivalry, sir Hector,” interrupted the Rover, laying his hand on the little riding whip, which had been thrown carelessly on the cabin table, and, tapping the shoulder of the tailor with the same, as though he were a sorcerer, and would disenchant the other with the touch: “Cheer up, honest and loyal subject: Fortune has at length ceased to frown: it is but a few hours since you complained that no custom came to your shop from this vessel, and now are you in a fair way to do the business of the whole ship.”

“Ah! honourable and magnanimous Rover,” rejoined Homespun, whose fluency returned with his senses, “I am an impoverished and undone man. My life has been one of weary and probationary hardships. Five bloody and cruel wars”——

“Enough. I have said that Fortune was just beginning to smile. Clothes are as necessary to gentlemen of our profession as to the parish priest. You shall not baste a seam without your reward. Behold!” he added, touching the spring of a secret drawer, which flew open, and discovered a confused pile of gold, in which the coins of nearly every Christian people were blended, “we are not without the means of paying those who serve us faithfully.”



The sudden exhibition of a horde of wealth, which not only greatly exceeded any thing of the kind he had ever before witnessed, but which actually surpassed his limited imaginative powers, was not without its effect on the sensitive feelings of the good-man. After feasting on the sight, for the few moments that his companion left the treasure exposed to view, he turned to the envied possessor of so much gold, and demanded,—the tones of increased confidence gradually stealing into his voice, as the inward man felt additional motives of encouragement,—

“And what am I expected to perform, mighty Seaman, for my portion of this wealth?”

“That which you daily perform on the land—to cut, to fashion, and to sew. Perhaps, too, your talent at a masquerade dress may be taxed, from time to time.”

“Ah! they are lawless and irreligious devices of the enemy, to lead men into sin and worldly abominations. But, worthy Mariner, there is my disconsolate consort, Desire; though stricken in years, and given to wordy strife, yet is she the lawful partner of my bosom, and the mother of a numerous offspring.”

“She shall not want. This is an asylum for distressed husbands. Your men, who have not force enough to command at home, come to my ship as to a city of refuge. You will make the seventh who has found peace by fleeing to this sanctuary. Their families are supported by ways best known to ourselves, and all parties are content. This is not the least of my benevolent acts.”

“It is praiseworthy and just, honourable Captain; and I hope that Desire and her offspring may not be forgotten. The labourer is surely worthy of his hire; and if, peradventure, I should toil in your behalf,



through stress of compulsion, I hope the good woman, and her young, may fatten on your liberality."

"You have my word; they shall not be neglected."

"Perhaps, just Gentleman, if an allotment should be made in advance from that stock of gold, the mind of my consort would be relieved, her inquiries after my fate not so searching, and her spirit less troubled. I have reason to understand the temper of Desire; and am well identified, that, while the prospect of want is before her eyes, there will be a clamour in Newport. Now that the Lord has graciously given me the hopes of a respite, there can be no sin in wishing to enjoy it in peace."

Although the Rover was far from believing, with his captive, that the tongue of Desire could disturb the harmony of his ship, he was in the humour to be indulgent. Touching the spring again, he took a handful of the gold, and, extending it towards Home-spun, demanded,—

"Will you take the bounty, and the oath? The money will then be your own."

"The Lord defend us from the evil one, and deliver us all from temptation!" ejaculated the tailor: "Heroic Rover, I have a dread of the law. Should any evil overcome you, in the shape of a King's cruiser, or a tempest cast you on the land, there might be danger in being contaminated too closely with your crew. Any little services which I may render, on compulsion, will be overlooked, I humbly hope; and I trust to your magnanimity, honest and honourable Commander, that the same will not be forgotten in the division of your upright earnings."

"This is but the spirit of cabbaging, a little distorted," muttered the Rover, as he turned lightly on his heel, and tapped the gong, with an impatience that sent the startling sound through every cranny of the ship. Four or five heads were thrust in at the dif-



ferent doors of the cabin, and the voice of one was heard, desiring to know the wishes of their leader.

“Take him to his hammock,” was the quick, sudden order.

The good-man Homespun, who, from fright or policy, appeared to be utterly unable to move, was quickly lifted from his seat, and conveyed to the door which communicated with the quarter-deck.

“Pause,” he exclaimed to his unceremonious bearers, as they were about to transport him to the place designated by their Captain; “I have one word yet to say. Honest and loyal Rebel, though I do not accept your service, neither do I refuse it in an unseemly and irreverent manner. It is a sore temptation, and I feel it at my fingers’ ends. But a covenant may be made between us, by which neither party shall be a loser, and in which the law shall find no grounds of displeasure. I would wish, mighty Commodore, to carry an honest name to my grave, and I would also wish to live out the number of my days; for, after having passed with so much credit, and unharmed, through five bloody and cruel wars”—

“Away with him!” was the stern and startling interruption.

Homespun vanished, as though magic had been employed in transporting him, and the Rover was again left to himself. His meditations were not interrupted, for a long time, by human footstep or voice. That breathing stillness, which unbending and stern discipline can alone impart, pervaded the ship. A landsman, seated in the cabin, might have fancied himself, although surrounded by a crew of lawless and violent men, in the solitude of a deserted church, so suppressed, and deadened, were even those sounds that were absolutely necessary. There were heard at times, it is true, the high and harsh notes of some reveller who appeared to break forth



in the strains of a sea song, which, as they issued from the depths of the vessel, and were not very musical in themselves, broke on the silence like the first discordant strains of a new practitioner on a bugle. But even these interruptions gradually grew less frequent, and finally became inaudible. At length the Rover heard a hand fumbling about the handle of the cabin door, and then his military friend once more made his appearance.

There was that in the step, the countenance, and the whole air of the General, which proclaimed that his recent service, if successful, had not been achieved entirely without personal hazard. The Rover, who had started from his seat the moment he saw who had entered, instantly demanded his report.

"The white is so drunk, that he cannot lie down without holding on to the mast; but the negro is either a cheat, or his head is made of flint."

"I hope you have not too easily abandoned the design."

"I would as soon batter a mountain! my retreat was not made a minute too soon."

The Rover fastened his eyes on the General, for a moment, in order to assure himself of the precise condition of his subaltern, ere he replied,—

"It is well. We will now retire for the night."

The other carefully dressed his tall person, and brought his face in the direction of the little hatchway so often named. Then, by a sort of desperate effort, he essayed to march to the spot, with his customary upright mien and military step. As one or two erratic movements, and crossings of the legs, were not commented on by his Captain, the worthy martinet descended the stairs, as he believed, with sufficient dignity; the moral man not being in the precise state which is the best adapted to discover any little blunders that might be made by his physical coadjutor. The Rover looked at his watch; and,



after allowing sufficient time for the deliberate retreat of the General, he stepped lightly on the stairs, and descended also.

The lower apartments of the vessel, though less striking in their equipments than the upper cabin, were arranged with great attention to neatness and comfort. A few offices for the servants occupied the extreme after-part of the ship, communicating by doors with the dining apartment of the secondary officers; or, as it was called in technical language, the "ward-room." On either side of this, again, were the state-rooms, an imposing name, by which the dormitories of those who are entitled to the honours of the quarter-deck are ever called. Forward of the ward-room, came the apartments of the minor officers; and, immediately in front of them, the corps of the individual who was called the General was lodged, forming, by their discipline, a barrier between the more lawless seamen and their superiors.

There was little departure, in this disposition of the accommodations, from the ordinary arrangements of vessels of war of the same description and force as the "Rover;" but Wilder had not failed to remark, that the bulkheads which separated the cabins from the birth-deck, or the part occupied by the crew, were far stouter than common, and that a small howitzer was at hand, to be used, as a physician might say, internally, should occasion require. The doors were of extraordinary strength, and the means of barricadoing them resembled more a preparation for battle, than the usual securities against petty encroachments on private property. Muskets, blunderbusses, pistols, sabres, half-pikes, &c., were fixed to the beams and carlings, or were made to serve as ornaments against the different bulkheads, in a profusion that plainly told they were there as much for use as for show. In short, to the eye of a seaman, the whole betrayed a state of things, in



which the superiors felt that their whole security, against the violence and insubordination of their inferiors, depended on their influence and their ability to resist, united; and that the former had not deemed it prudent to neglect any of the precautions which might aid their comparatively less powerful physical force.

In the principal of the lower apartments, or the ward-room, the Rover found his newly enlisted lieutenant, apparently busy in studying the regulations of the service in which he had just embarked. Approaching the corner in which the latter had seated himself, the former said, in a frank, encouraging, and even confidential manner,—

“I hope you find our laws sufficiently firm, Mr Wilder.”

“Want of firmness is not their fault; if the same quality can always be observed in administering them, it is well,” returned the other, rising to salute his superior. “I have never found such rigid rules, even in”——

“Even in what, sir?” demanded the Rover, perceiving that his companion hesitated.

“I was about to say, ‘Even in his Majesty’s service,’” returned Wilder, slightly colouring. “I know not whether it may be a fault, or a recommendation, to have served in a King’s ship.”

“It is the latter; at least I, for one, should think it so, since I learned my trade in the same service.”

“In what ship?” eagerly interrupted Wilder.

“In many,” was the cold reply. “But, speaking of rigid rules, you will soon perceive, that, in a service where there are no courts on shore to protect us, nor any sister-cruisers to look after each other’s welfare, no small portion of power is necessarily vested in the Commander. You find my authority a good deal extended.”



"A little unlimited," said Wilder, with a smile that might have passed for ironical.

"I hope you will have no occasion to say that it is arbitrarily executed," returned the Rover, without observing, or perhaps without letting it appear that he observed, the expression of his companion's countenance. "But your hour is come, and you are now at liberty to land."

The young man thanked him, with a courteous inclination of the head, and expressed his readiness to go. As they ascended the ladder into the upper cabin, the Captain expressed his regret that the hour, and the necessity of preserving the incognito of his ship, would not permit him to send an officer of his rank ashore in the manner he could wish.

"But then there is the skiff, in which you came off, still alongside, and your own two stout fellows will soon twitch you to yon point. A propos of those two men, are they included in our arrangements?"

"They have never quitted me since my childhood, and would not wish to do it now."

"It is a singular tie that unites two men, so oddly constituted, to one so different, by habits and education, from themselves," returned the Rover, glancing his eye keenly at the other, and withdrawing it the instant he perceived his interest in the answer was observed.

"It is," Wilder calmly replied; "but, as we are all seamen, the difference is not so great as one would at first imagine. I will now join them, and take an opportunity to let them know that they are to serve in future under your orders."

The Rover suffered him to leave the cabin, following to the quarter-deck, with a careless step, as if he had come abroad to breathe the open air of the night.

The weather had not changed, but it still con-



tinued dark, though mild. The same stillness as before reigned on the decks of the ship; and nowhere, with a solitary exception, was a human form to be seen, amid the collection of dark objects that rose on the sight, all of which Wilder well understood to be necessary fixtures in the vessel. The exception was the same individual who had first received our adventurer, and who still paced the quarter-deck, wrapped, as before, in a watch-coat. To this personage the youth now addressed himself, announcing his intention temporarily to quit the vessel. His communication was received with a respect that satisfied him his new rank was already known, although, as it would seem, it was to be made to succumb to the superior authority of the Rover.

"You know, sir, that no one, of whatever station, can leave the ship at this hour, without an order from the Captain," was the civil, but steady reply.

"So I presume; but I have the order, and transmit it to you. I shall land in my own boat."

The other, seeing a figure within hearing, which he well knew to be that of his Commander, waited an instant, to ascertain if what he heard was true. Finding that no objection was made, nor any sign given, to the contrary, he merely indicated the place where the other would find his boat.

"The men have left it!" exclaimed Wilder, stepping back in surprise, as he was about to descend the vessel's side.

"Have the rascals run?"

"Sir, they have not run; neither are they rascals. They are in this ship, and must be found."

The other waited, to witness the effect of these authoritative words, too, on the individual, who still lingered in the shadow of a mast. As no answer was, however, given from that quarter, he saw the necessity of obedience. Intimating his intention to seek the men, he passed into the forward parts of



the vessel, leaving Wilder, as he thought, in the sole possession of the quarter-deck. The latter was, however, soon undeceived. The Rover, advancing carelessly to his side, made an allusion to the condition of his vessel, in order to divert the thoughts of his new lieutenant, who, by his hurried manner of pacing the deck, he saw, was beginning to indulge in uneasy meditations.

“A charming sea-boat, Mr Wilder,” he continued, “and one that never throws a drop of spray abaft her mainmast. She is just the craft a seaman loves; easy on her rigging, and lively in a sea. I call her the ‘Dolphin,’ from the manner in which she cuts the water; and, perhaps, because she has as many colours as that fish, you will say—Jack must have a name for his ship, you know, and I dislike your cut-throat appellations, your ‘Spit-fires’ and ‘Bloody-murders.’”

“You were fortunate in finding such a vessel. Was she built to your orders?”

“Few ships, under six hundred tons, sail from these colonies, that are not built to serve my purposes,” returned the Rover, with a smile; as if he would cheer his companion, by displaying the mine of wealth that was opening to him, through the new connexion he had made. “This vessel was originally built for his Most Faithful Majesty; and, I believe, was either intended as a present or a scourge to the Algerines; but—but she has changed owners, as you see, and her fortune is a little altered; though how, or why, is a trifle with which we will not, just now, divert ourselves. I have had her in port; she has undergone some improvements, and is now altogether suited to a running trade.”

“You then venture, sometimes, inside the forts?”

“When you have leisure, my private journal may afford some interest,” the other evasively replied.



"I hope, Mr Wilder, you find this vessel in such a state that a seaman need not blush for her?"

"Her beauty and neatness first caught my eye, and induced me to make closer inquiries into her character."

"You were quick in seeing that she was kept at a single anchor!" returned the other, laughing. "But I never risk any thing without a reason; not even the loss of my ground tackle. It would be no great achievement, for so warm a battery as this I carry, to silence yonder apology for a fort; but, in doing it, we might receive an unfortunate hit, and therefore do I keep ready for an instant-departure."

"It must be a little awkward, to fight in a war where one cannot lower his flag in any emergency!" said Wilder; more like one who mused, than one who intended to express the opinion aloud.

"The bottom is always beneath us," was the laconic answer. "But to you I may say, that I am, on principle, tender on my spars. They are examined daily, like the heels of a racer; for it often happens that our valour must be well-tempered by discretion."

"And how, and where, do you refit, when damaged in a gale, or in a fight?"

"Hum! We contrive to refit, sir, and to take the sea in tolerable condition."

He stopped; and Wilder, perceiving that he was not yet deemed entitled to entire confidence, continued silent. In this pause, the officer returned, followed by the black alone. A few words served to explain the condition of *Fid*. It was very apparent that the young man was not only disappointed, but that he was deeply mortified. The frank and ingenuous air, however, with which he turned to the *Rover*, to apologize for the dereliction of his follower, satisfied the latter that he was far from suspecting



any improper agency in bringing about his awkward condition.

"You know the character of seamen too well, sir," he said, "to impute this oversight to my poor fellow as a heinous fault. A better sailor never lay on a yard, or stretched a ratlin, than Dick Fid; but I must allow he has the quality of good fellowship to excess."

"You are fortunate in having one man left you to pull the boat ashore," carelessly returned the other.

"I am more than equal to that little exertion myself: nor do I like to separate the men. With your permission, the black shall be birthed, too, in the ship to-night."

"As you please. Empty hammocks are not scarce among us, since the last brush."

Wilder then directed the negro to return to his messmate, and to watch over him so long as he should be unable to look after himself. The black, who was far from being as clear-headed as common, willingly complied. The young man then took leave of his companions, and descended into the skiff. As he pulled, with vigorous arms, away from the dark ship, his eyes were cast upward, with a seaman's pleasure, on the order and neatness of her gear, and thence they fell on the frowning mass of the hull. A light-built, compact form was seen standing on the heel of the bowsprit, apparently watching his movements; and, notwithstanding the gloom of the clouded star-light, he was enabled to detect, in the individual who took so much apparent interest in his proceedings, the person of the Rover.



## CHAPTER VIII.

—————"What is yon gentleman?"

NURSE. "The son and heir of old Tiberio."

JULIET. "What's he that follows there, that would not dance?"

NURSE. "Marry, I know not."

*Romeo and Juliet.*

THE SUN was just heaving up, out of the field of waters in which the blue islands of Massachusetts lie, when the inhabitants of Newport were seen opening their doors and windows, and preparing for the different employments of the day, with the freshness and alacrity of people who had wisely adhered to the natural allotments of time in seeking their rests, or in pursuing their pleasures. The morning salutations passed cheerfully from one to another, as each undid the slight fastenings of his shop; and many a kind inquiry was made, and returned, after the condition of a daughter's fever, or the rheumatism of some aged grandam. As the landlord of the "Foul Anchor" was so wary in protecting the character of his house from any unjust imputations of unseemly revelling, so was he among the foremost in opening his doors, to catch any transient customer, who might feel the necessity of washing away the damps of the past night, in some invigorating stomachic. This cordial was very generally taken in the British provinces, under the various names of "bit-ters," "juleps," "morning-drams," "fogmatics," &c., according as the situation of each district appeared to require some particular preventive. The custom is getting a little into disuse, it is true; but still it retains much of that sacred character which it would seem is the concomitant of antiquity. It is not a little extraordinary that this venerable and laudable practice, of washing away the unwholesome impurities engendered in the human system, at a time when,



as it is entirely without any moral protector, it is left exposed to the attacks of all the evils to which flesh is heir, should subject the American to the witticisms of his European brother. We are not among the least grateful to those foreign philanthropists who take so deep an interest in our welfare as seldom to let any republican foible pass, without applying to it, as it merits, the caustic application of their purifying pens. We are, perhaps, the more sensible of this generosity, because we have had so much occasion to witness, that, so great is their zeal in behalf of our infant States, (robust, and a little unmanageable perhaps, but still infant) they are wont, in the warmth of their ardour, to reform Cis-atlantic sins, to overlook not a few backslidings of their own. Numberless are the moral missionaries that the mother country, for instance, has sent among us, on these pious and benevolent errands. We can only regret that their efforts have been crowned with so little success. It was our fortune to be familiarly acquainted with one of these worthies, who never lost an opportunity of declaiming, above all, against the infamy of the particular practice to which we have just alluded. Indeed, so broad was the ground he took, that he held it to be not only immoral, but, what was far worse, ungentleel, to swallow any thing stronger than small beer, before the hour allotted to dinner. After that important period, it was not only permitted to assuage the previous mortifications of the flesh, but, so liberal did he show himself in the orthodox indulgence, that he was regularly carried to his bed at midnight, from which he as regularly issued, in the course of the following morning, to discourse again on the thousand deformities of premature drink. And here we would take occasion to say, that, as to our own insignificant person, we eschew the abomination altogether; and only regret that those of the two nations, who find pleasure in



the practice, could not come to some amicable understanding as to the precise period, of the twenty-four hours, when it is permitted to such Christian gentlemen as talk English to get drunk. That the negotiators who framed the last treaty of amity should have overlooked this important moral topic, is another evidence that both parties were so tired of an unprofitable war as to patch up a peace in a hurry. It is not too late to name a commission for this purpose; and, in order that the question may be fairly treated on its merits, we presume to suggest to the Executive the propriety of nominating, as our commissioner, some confirmed advocate of the system of "juleps." It is believed our worthy and indulgent Mother can have no difficulty in selecting a suitable opponent from the ranks of her numerous and well-trained diplomatic corps.

With this manifestation of our personal liberality, united to so much interest in the proper, and we hope final, disposition of this important question, we may be permitted to resume the narrative, without being set down as advocates for morning stimulants, or evening intoxication; which is a very just division of the whole subject, as we believe, from no very limited observation.

The landlord of the "Foul Anchor," then, was early a-foot, to gain an honest penny from any of the supporters of the former system who might chance to select his bar for their morning sacrifices to Bacchus, in preference to that of his neighbour, he who endeavoured to entice the lieges, by exhibiting a red-faced man, in a scarlet coat, that was called the "Head of George the Second." It would seem that the commendable activity of the alert publican was not to go without its reward. The tide of custom set strongly, for the first half-hour, towards the haven of his hospitable bar; nor did he appear entirely to abandon the hopes of a further influx, even



after the usual period of such arrivals began to pass away. Finding, however, that his customers were beginning to depart, on their several pursuits, he left his station, and appeared at the outer door, with a hand in each pocket, as though he found a secret pleasure in the merry jingling of their new tenants. A stranger, who had not entered with the others, and who, of course, had not partaken of the customary libations, was standing at a little distance, with a hand thrust into the bosom of his vest, as if he were chiefly occupied with his own reflections. This figure caught the understanding eye of the publican, who instantly conceived that no man, who had had recourse to the proper morning stimulants, could wear so meditative a face at that early period in the cares of the day, and that consequently something was yet to be gained, by opening the path of direct communication between them.

“A clean air this, friend, to brush away the damps of the night,” he said, snuffing the really delicious and invigorating breathings of a fine October morning. “It is such purifiers as this, that gives our island its character, and makes it perhaps the very healthiest, as it is universally admitted to be the beautifullest, spot in creation.—A stranger here, ’tis likely?”

“But quite lately arrived, sir,” was the reply.

“A seafaring man, by your dress? and one in search of a ship, as I am ready to qualify to;” continued the publican, chuckling, perhaps, at his own penetration. “We have many such that passes here-away; but people mustn’t think, because Newport is so flourishing a town, that births can always be had for asking. Have you tried your luck yet in the Capital of the Bay Province?”

“I left Boston no later than the day before yesterday.”

“What, couldn’t the proud townsfolk find you a ship! Ay, they are a mighty people at talking, and



it isn't often that they put their candle under the bushel; and yet there are what I call good judges, who think Narraganset Bay is in a fair way, shortly, to count as many sail as Massachusetts. There, yonder, is a wholesome brig, that is going, within the week, to turn her horses into rum and sugar; and here is a ship that hauled into the stream no longer ago than yesterday sun-down. That is a noble vessel, and has cabins fit for a prince! She'll be off with the change of the wind; and I dare say a good hand wouldn't go a-begging aboard her just now. Then yonder is a slaver, off the fort, if you like a cargo of wool-heads for your money."

"And is it thought the ship in the inner harbour will sail with the first wind?" demanded the stranger.

"It is downright. My wife is a full cousin to the wife of the Collector's clerk; and I have it straight that the papers are ready, and that nothing but the wind detains them. I keep some short scores, you know, friend, with the blue-jackets, and it behoves an honest man to look to his interests in these hard times. Yes, there she lies; a well-known ship, the 'Royal Caroline.' She makes a regular v'yage once a year between the Provinces and Bristol, touching here, out and home, to give us certain supplies, and to wood and water; and then she goes home, or to the Carolinas, as the case may be."

"Pray, sir, has she much of an armament?" continued the stranger, who began to lose his thoughtful air, in the more evident interest he was beginning to take in the discourse.

"Yes, yes; she is not without a few bull-dogs, to bark in defence of her own rights, and to say a word in support of his Majesty's honour, too; God bless him! Judy! you Jude!" he shouted, at the top of his voice, to a negro girl, who was gathering kindling-wood among the chips of a ship-yard, "scamper



over to neighbour Homespun's, and rattle away at his bed-room windows: the man has overslept himself: it is not common to hear seven o'clock strike, and the thirsty tailor not appear for his bitters."

A short cessation took place in the dialogue, while the wench was executing her master's orders. The summons produced no other effect than to draw a shrill reply from Desire, whose voice penetrated, through the thin board coverings of the little dwelling, as readily as sound would be conveyed through a sieve. In another moment a window was opened, and the worthy housewife thrust her disturbed visage into the fresh air of the morning.

"What next! what next!" demanded the offended, and, as she was fain to believe, neglected wife, under the impression that it was her truant husband, making his tardy return to his domestic allegiance, who had thus presumed to disturb her slumbers. "Is it not enough that you have eloped from my bed and board, for a long night, but you must dare to break in on the natural rest of a whole family, seven blessed children, without counting their mother! O Hector! Hector! an example are you getting to be to the young and giddy, and a warning will you yet prove to the unthoughtful!"

"Bring hither the black book," said the publican to his wife, who had been drawn to a window by the lamentations of Desire; "I think the woman said something about starting on a journey between two days; and, if such has been the philosophy of the good-man, it behoves all honest people to look into their accounts. Ay, as I live, Keziah, you have let the limping beggar get seventeen and sixpence into arrears, and that for such trifles as morning-drams and night-caps!"

"You are wrathful, friend, without reason; the man has made a garment for the boy at school, and found the"—



"Hush, good woman," interrupted her husband, returning the book, and making a sign for her to retire; "I dare say it will all come round in proper time, and the less noise we make about the backslidings of a neighbour, the less will be said of our own transgressions. A worthy and hard-working mechanic, sir," he continued, addressing the stranger; "but a man who could never get the sun to shine in at his windows, though, Heaven knows, the glass is none too thick for such a blessing."

"And do you imagine, on evidence as slight as this we have seen, that such a man has actually absconded?"

"Why, it is a calamity that has befallen his betters!" returned the publican, interlocking his fingers across the rotundity of his person, with an air of grave consideration. "We innkeepers—who live, as it were, in plain sight of every man's secrets; for it is after a visit to us that one is apt truly to open his heart—should know something of the affairs of a neighbourhood. If the good-man Homespun could smooth down the temper of his companion as easily as he lays a seam into its place, the thing might not occur, but——Do you drink this morning, sir?"

"A drop of your best."

"As I was saying," continued the other, while he furnished his customer, according to his desire, "if a tailor's goose would take the wrinkles out of the ruffled temper of a woman, as it does out of the cloth; and then, if, after it had done this task, a man might eat it, as he would yonder bird hanging behind my bar——Perhaps you will have occasion to make your dinner with us, too, sir?"

"I cannot say I shall not," returned the stranger, paying for the dram he had barely tasted; "it greatly depends on the result of my inquiries concerning the different vessels in the port."

"Then would I, though perfectly disinterested, as



you know, sir, recommend you to make this house your home, while you sojourn in the town. It is the resort of most of the seafaring men; and I may say this much of myself, without conceit—No man can tell you more of what you want to know, than the landlord of the ‘Foul Anchor.’ ”

“ You advise an application to the Commander of this vessel, in the stream, for a birth: Will she sail so soon as you have named?”

“ With the first wind. I know the whole history of the ship, from the day they laid the blocks for her keel to the minute when she let her anchor go where you now see her. The great Southern Heiress, General Grayson’s fine daughter, is to be a passenger; she, and her overlooker, Government-lady, I believe they call her—a Mrs Wyllys—are waiting for the signal, up here, at the residence of Madam de Lacey; she that is the relict of the Rear-Admiral of that name, who is full-sister to the General; and, therefore, an aunt to the young lady, according to my reckoning. Many people think the two fortunes will go together; in which case, he will be not only a lucky man, but a rich one, who gets Miss Getty Grayson for a wife.”

The stranger, who had maintained rather an indifferent manner during the close of the foregoing dialogue, appeared now disposed to enter into it, with a degree of interest suited to the sex and condition of the present subject of their discourse. After waiting to catch the last syllable that the publican chose to expend his breath on, he demanded, a little abruptly,—

“ And you say the house near us, on the rising ground, is the residence of Mrs de Lacey?”

“ If I did, I know nothing of the matter. By ‘up here,’ I mean half a mile off. It is a place fit for a lady of her quality, and none of your elbowy dwellings, like these crowded about us. One may easily



tell the house, by its pretty blinds and its shades. I'll engage there are no such shades, in all Europe, as them very trees that stand before the door of Madam de Lacey."

"It is very probable," muttered the stranger, who, not appearing quite as sensitive in his provincial admiration as the publican, had already relapsed into his former musing air. Instead of pushing the discourse, he suddenly turned the subject, by making some common-place remark; and then, repeating the probability of his being obliged to return, he walked deliberately away, taking the direction of the residence of Mrs de Lacey. The observing publican would, probably, have found sufficient matter for observation, in this abrupt termination of the interview, had not Desire, at that precise moment, broken out of her habitation, and diverted his attention, by the peculiarly piquant manner in which she delineated the character of her delinquent husband.

The reader has probably, ere this, suspected that the individual who had conferred with the publican, as a stranger, was not unknown to himself. It was, in truth, no other than Wilder. But, in the completion of his own secret purposes, the young mariner left the wordy war in his rear; and, turning up the gentle ascent, against the side of which the town is built, he proceeded towards the suburbs.

It was not difficult to distinguish the house he sought, among a dozen other similar retreats, by its "shades," as the innkeeper, in conformity to a provincial use of the word, had termed a few really noble elms that grew in the little court before its door. In order, however, to assure himself that he was right, he confirmed his surmises by actual inquiry, and then continued thoughtfully on his path.

The morning had, by this time, fairly opened, with every appearance of another of those fine,



bland, autumnal days for which the climate is, or ought to be, so distinguished. The little air there was, came from the south, fanning the face of our adventurer, as he occasionally paused, in his ascent, to gaze at the different vessels in the harbour, like a mild breeze in June. In short, it was just such a time as one, who is fond of strolling in the fields, is apt to seize on with rapture, and which a seaman sets down as a day lost in his reckoning.

Wilder was first drawn from his musings by the sound of a dialogue that came from persons who were evidently approaching. There was one voice, in particular, that caused his blood to thrill, he knew not why, and which appeared unaccountably, even to himself, to set in motion every latent faculty of his system. Profiting, by the formation of the ground, he sprang, unseen, up a little bank, and, approaching an angle in a low wall, he found himself in the immediate proximity of the speakers.

The wall enclosed the garden and pleasure-grounds of a mansion, that he now perceived was the residence of Mrs de Lacey. A rustic summer-house, which, in the proper season, had been nearly buried in leaves and flowers, stood at no great distance from the road. By its elevation and position, it commanded a view of the town, the harbour, the isles of Massachusetts to the east, those of the Providence Plantations to the west, and, to the south, an illimitable expanse of ocean. As it had now lost its leafy covering, there was no difficulty in looking directly into its centre, through the rude pillars which supported its little dome. Here Wilder discovered precisely the very party to whose conversation he had been a listener the previous day, while caged, with the Rover, in the loft of the ruin. Though the Admiral's widow and Mrs Wyllys were most in advance, evidently addressing some one who was, like himself, in the public road, the quick eye of the



young sailor soon detected the more enticing person of the blooming Gertrude, in the back-ground. His observations were, however, interrupted by a reply from the individual who as yet was unseen. Directed by the voice, Wilder was next enabled to perceive the person of a man in a green old age, who, seated on a stone by the way side, appeared to be resting his weary limbs, while he answered to some interrogations from the summer-house. Though his head was white, and the hand, which grasped a long walking-staff, sometimes trembled, as its owner sought additional support from its assistance, there was that in the costume, the manner, and the voice of the speaker, which furnished sufficient evidence of his having once been a veteran of the sea.

“Lord! your Ladyship, Ma’am,” he said, in tones that were getting tremulous, even while they retained the deep characteristic intonations of his profession, “we old sea-dogs never stop to look into an almanac, to see which way the wind will come after the next thaw, before we put to sea. It is enough for us, that the sailing orders are aboard, and that the Captain has taken leave of his Lady.”

“Ah! the very words of the poor lamented Admiral!” exclaimed Mrs de Lacey, who evidently found great satisfaction in pursuing the discourse with this superannuated mariner. “And then you are of opinion, honest friend, that, when a ship is ready, she should sail, whether the wind is”——

“Here is another follower of the sea, opportunely come to lend us his advice,” interrupted Gertrude, with a hurried air, as if to divert the attention of her aunt from something very like a dogmatical termination of an argument that had just occurred between her and Mrs Wyllys; “perhaps to serve as an umpire.”

“True,” said the latter. “Pray, what think you



of the weather to-day, sir? would it be profitable to sail in such a time, or not?"

The young mariner reluctantly withdrew his eyes from the blushing Gertrude, who, in her eagerness to point him out, had advanced to the front, and was now shrinking back, timidly, to the centre of the building again, like one who already repented of her temerity. He then fastened his look on her who put the question; and so long and riveted was his gaze, that she saw fit to repeat it, believing that what she had first said was not properly understood.

"There is little faith to be put in the weather, Madam," was the dilatory reply. "A man has followed the sea to but little purpose who is tardy in making that discovery."

There was something so sweet and gentle, at the same time that it was manly, in the voice of Wilder, that the ladies, by a common impulse, seemed struck with its peculiarities. The neatness of his attire, which, while it was strictly professional, was worn with an air of smartness, and even of gentility, that rendered it difficult to suppose that he was not entitled to lay claim to a higher station in society than that in which he actually appeared, added to this impression. Bending her head, with a manner that was intended to be polite, a little more perhaps in self-respect than out of consideration to the other, as if in deference to the equivocal character of his appearance, Mrs de Lacey resumed the discourse.

"These ladies," she said, "are about to embark in yonder ship, for the province of Carolina, and we were consulting concerning the quarter in which the wind will probably blow next. But, in such a vessel, it cannot matter much, I should think, sir, whether the wind were fair or foul."

"I think not," was the reply. "She looks to me like a ship that will not do much, let the wind be as it may."



"She has the reputation of being a very fast sailer.—Reputation! we know she is such, having come from home to the Colonies in the incredibly short passage of seven weeks! But seamen have their favourites and prejudices, I believe, like us poor mortals ashore. You will therefore excuse me, if I ask this honest veteran for an opinion on this particular point also. What do you imagine, friend, to be the sailing qualities of yonder ship—she with the peculiarly high top-gallant-booms, and such conspicuous round-tops?"

The lip of Wilder curled, and a smile struggled with the gravity of his countenance; but he continued silent. On the other hand, the old mariner arose, and appeared to examine the ship, like one who perfectly comprehended the technical language of the Admiral's widow.

"The ship in the inner harbour, your Ladyship," he answered, when his examination was finished, "which is, I suppose, the vessel that Madam means, is just such a ship as does a sailor's eye good to look on. A gallant and a safe boat she is, as I will swear; and as to sailing, though she may not be altogether a witch, yet is she a fast craft, or I'm no judge of blue water, or of those that live on it."

"Here is at once a difference of opinion!" exclaimed Mrs de Lacey. "I am glad, however, you pronounce her safe; for, although seamen love a fast-sailing vessel, these ladies will not like her the less for the security. I presume, sir, you will not dispute her being *safe*."

"The very quality I should most deny," was the laconic answer of Wilder.

"It is remarkable! This is a veteran seaman, sir, and he appears to think differently."

"He may have seen more, in his time, than myself, Madam; but I doubt whether he can, just now, see as well. This is something of a distance to dis-



cover the merits or demerits of a ship : I have been nigher."

"Then you really think there is danger to be apprehended, sir?" demanded the soft voice of Gertrude, whose fears had gotten the better of her diffidence.

"I do. Had I mother, or sister," touching his hat, and bowing to his fair interrogator, as he uttered the latter word with much emphasis, "I would hesitate to let her embark in that ship. On my honour, Ladies, I do assure you, that I think this very vessel in more danger than any ship which has left, or probably will leave, a port in the Provinces this autumn."

"This is extraordinary!" observed Mrs Wyllys. "It is not the character we have received of the vessel, which has been greatly exaggerated, or she is entitled to be considered as uncommonly convenient and safe. May I ask, sir, on what circumstances you have founded this opinion?"

"They are sufficiently plain. She is too lean in the harping, and too full in the counter, to steer. Then, she is as wall-sided as a church, and stows too much above the water-line. Besides this, she carries no head-sail, but all the press upon her will be aft, which will jam her into the wind, and, more than likely, throw her aback. The day will come when that ship will go down stern foremost."

His auditors listened to this opinion, which Wilder delivered in an oracular and very decided manner, with that sort of secret faith, and humble dependance, which the uninstructed are so apt to lend to the initiated in the mysteries of any imposing profession. Neither of them had certainly a very clear perception of his meaning; but there were, apparently, danger and death in his very words. Mrs de Lacey felt it incumbent on her pecu-



liar advantages, however, to manifest how well she comprehended the subject.

"These are certainly very serious evils!" she exclaimed. "It is quite unaccountable that my agent should have neglected to mention them. Is there any other particular quality, sir, that strikes your eye at this distance, and which you deem alarming?"

"Too many. You observe that her top-gallant-masts are fiddled abaft; none of her lofty sails set flying; and then, Madam, she has depended on bobstays and gammonings for the security of that very important part of a vessel, the bowsprit."

"Too true! too true!" said Mrs de Lacey, in a sort of professional horror. "These things had escaped me; but I see them all, now they are mentioned. Such neglect is highly culpable; more especially to rely on bobstays and gammonings for the security of a bowsprit! Really, Mrs Wyllys, I can never consent that my niece should embark in such a vessel."

The calm, penetrating eye of Wyllys had been riveted on the countenance of Wilder while he was speaking, and she now turned it, with undisturbed serenity, on the Admiral's widow, to reply.

"Perhaps the danger has been a little magnified," she observed. "Let us inquire of this other seaman what he thinks on these several points.—And do you see all these serious dangers to be apprehended, friend, in trusting ourselves, at this season of the year, in a passage to the Carolinas, aboard of yonder ship?"

"Lord, Madam!" said the gray-headed mariner, with a chuckling laugh, "these are new-fashioned faults and difficulties, if they be faults and difficulties at all! In my time, such matters were never heard of; and I confess I am so stupid as not to un-



derstand the half the young gentleman has been saying."

"It is some time, I fancy, old man, since you were last at sea," Wilder coolly observed.

"Some five or six years since the last time, and fifty since the first," was the answer.

"Then you do not see the same causes for apprehension?" Mrs Wyllys once more demanded.

"Old and worn out as I am, Lady, if her Captain will give me a birth aboard her, I will thank him for the same as a favour."

"Misery seeks any relief," said Mrs de Lacey, in an under tone, and bestowing on her companions a significant glance. "I incline to the opinion of the younger seaman; for he supports it with substantial, professional reasons."

Mrs Wyllys suspended her questions, just as long as complaisance to the last speaker seemed to require; and then she resumed them as follows, addressing her next inquiry to Wilder.

"And how do you explain this difference in judgment, between two men who ought both to be so well qualified to decide right?"

"I believe there is a well-known proverb which will answer that question," returned the young man, smiling: "But some allowance must be made for the improvements in ships; and, perhaps, some little deference to the stations we have respectively filled on board them."

"Both very true. Still, one would think the changes of half a dozen years cannot be so very considerable, in a profession that is so exceedingly ancient."

"Your pardon, Madam. They require constant practice to know them. Now, I dare say that yonder worthy old tar is ignorant of the manner in which a ship, when pressed by her canvas, is made to 'cut the waves with her taffrail.'"



“Impossible !” cried the Admiral’s widow ; “the youngest and the meanest mariner must have been struck with the beauty of such a spectacle.”

“Yes, yes,” returned the old tar, who wore the air of an offended man, and who, probably, had he been ignorant of any part of his art, was not just then in the temper to confess it ; “many is the proud ship that I have seen doing the very same ; and, as the lady says, a grand and comely sight it is !”

Wilder appeared confounded. He bit his lip, like one who was over-reached either by excessive ignorance or exceeding cunning ; but the self-complacency of Mrs de Lacey spared him the necessity of an immediate reply.

“It would have been an extraordinary circumstance, truly,” she said, “that a man should have grown white-headed on the seas, and never have been struck with so noble a spectacle. But then, my honest tar, you appear to be wrong in overlooking the striking faults in yonder ship, which this, a—a—this gentleman has just, and so properly, named.”

“I do not call them faults, your Ladyship. Such is the way my late brave and excellent Commander always had his own ship rigged ; and I am bold to say that a better seaman, or a more honest man, never served in his Majesty’s fleet.”

“And you have served the King ! How was your beloved Commander named ?”

“How should he be ! By us, who knew him well, he was called Fair-weather ; for it was always smooth water, and prosperous times, under his orders ; though, on shore, he was known as the gallant and victorious Rear-Admiral de Lacey.”

“And did my late revered and skilful husband cause his ships to be rigged in this manner ?” said the widow, with a tremour in her voice, that bespoke how much, and how truly, she was overcome by surprise and gratified pride.



The aged tar lifted his bending frame from the stone, and bowed low, as he answered,—

“If I have the honour of seeing my Admiral’s Lady, it will prove a joyful sight to my old eyes. Sixteen years did I serve in his own ship, and five more in the same squadron. I dare say your Ladyship may have heard him speak of the captain of his main-top, Bob Bunt.”

“I dare say—I dare say—He loved to talk of those who served him faithfully.”

“Ay, God bless him, and make his memory glorious! He was a kind officer, and one that never forgot a friend, let it be that his duty kept him on a yard or in the cabin. He was the sailor’s friend, that very same Admiral!”

“This is a grateful man,” said Mrs de Lacey, wiping her eyes, “and I dare say a competent judge of a vessel. And are you quite sure, worthy friend, that my late revered husband had all his ships arranged like the one of which we have been talking?”

“Very sure, Madam; for, with my own hands, did I assist to rig them.”

“Even to the bobstays?”

“And the gammonings, my Lady. Were the Admiral alive, and here, he would call yon ‘a safe and well-fitted ship,’ as I am ready to swear.”

Mrs de Lacey turned, with an air of great dignity and entire decision, to Wilder, as she continued,—

“I have, then, made a small mistake in memory which is not surprising, when one recollects, that he who taught me so much of the profession is no longer here to continue his lessons. We are much obliged to you, sir, for your opinion; but we must think that you have over-rated the danger.”

“On my honour, Madam,” interrupted Wilder, laying his hand on his heart, and speaking with singular emphasis, “I am sincere in what I say. I do affirm, that I believe there will be great danger in



embarking in yonder ship; and I call Heaven to witness, that, in so saying, I am actuated by no malice to her Commander, her owners, nor any connected with her."

"We dare say, sir, you are very sincere: We only think you a little in error," returned the Admiral's widow, with a commiserating, and what she intended for a condescending, smile. "We are your debtors for your good intentions, at least. Come, worthy veteran, we must not part here. You will gain admission by knocking at my door; and we shall talk further of these matters."

Then, bowing to Wilder, she led the way up the garden, followed by all her companions. The step of Mrs de Lacey was proud, like the tread of one conscious of all her advantages; while that of Wyllys was slow, as if she were buried in thought. Gertrude kept close to the side of the latter, with her face hid beneath the shade of a gipsy hat. Wilder fancied that he could discover the stolen and anxious glance that she threw back towards one who had excited a decided emotion in her sensitive bosom, though it was a feeling no more attractive than alarm. He lingered until they were lost amid the shrubbery. Then, turning to pour out his disappointment on his brother tar, he found that the old man had made such good use of his time, as to be entering the gate, most probably felicitating himself on the prospect of reaping the reward of his recent adulation.



## CHAPTER IX.

“He ran this way, and leap’d this orchard wall.”—*Shakspeare.*

WILDER retired from the field like a defeated man. Accident, or, as he was willing to term it, the sycophancy of the old mariner, had counteracted his own little artifice; and he was now left without the remotest chance of being again favoured with such another opportunity of effecting his purpose. We shall not, at this period of the narrative, enter into a detail of the feelings and policy which induced our adventurer to plot against the apparent interests of those with whom he had so recently associated himself; it is enough, for our present object, that the facts themselves should be distinctly set before the reader.

The return of the disappointed young sailor, towards the town, was moody and slow. More than once he stopped short in the descent, and fastened his eyes, for minutes together, on the different vessels in the harbour. But, in these frequent halts; no evidence of the particular interest he took in any one of the ships escaped him. Perhaps his gaze at the Southern trader was longer, and more earnest, than at any other; though his eye, at times, wandered curiously, and even anxiously, over every craft that lay within the shelter of the haven.

The customary hour for exertion had now arrived, and the sounds of labour were beginning to be heard, issuing from every quarter of the place. The songs of the mariners were rising on the calm of the morning, with their peculiar, long-drawn intonations. The ship in the inner harbour was among the first to furnish this proof of the industry of her people, and of her approaching departure. It was only as these



movements caught his eye, that Wilder seemed to be thoroughly awakened from his abstraction, and to pursue his observations with an undivided mind. He saw the seamen ascend the rigging, in that lazy manner which is so strongly contrasted by their activity in moments of need; and here and there a human form was showing itself on the black and ponderous yards. In a few moments, the fore-top-sail fell, from its compact compass on the yard, into graceful and careless festoons. This, the attentive Wilder well knew, was, among all trading vessels, the signal of sailing. In a few more minutes, the lower angles of this important sail were drawn to the extremities of the corresponding spar beneath; and then the heavy yard was seen slowly ascending the mast, dragging after it the opening folds of the sail, until the latter was tightened at all its edges, and displayed itself in one broad, snow-white sheet of canvas. Against this wide surface the light currents of air fell, and as often receded; the sail bellying and collapsing in a manner to show that, as yet, they were powerless. At this point the preparations appeared suspended, as if the mariners, having thus invited the breeze, were awaiting to see if their invocation was likely to be attended with success.

It was perhaps but a natural transition for him, who so closely observed these indications of departure, in the ship so often named, to turn his eyes on the vessel which lay without the fort, in order to witness the effect so manifest a signal had produced in her, also. But the closest and the keenest scrutiny could have detected no sign of any bond of interest between the two. While the former was making the movements just described, the latter lay at her anchors, without the smallest proof that man existed within the mass of her black and inanimate hull. So quiet and motionless did she seem, that one, who had



never been instructed in the matter, might readily have believed her a fixture in the sea, some symmetrical and enormous excrescence thrown up by the waves, with its mazes of lines and pointed fingers, or one of those fantastic monsters that are believed to exist in the bottom of the ocean, darkened by the fogs and tempests of ages. But, to the understanding eye of Wilder, she exhibited a very different spectacle. He easily saw, through all this apparently drowsy quietude, those signs of readiness which a seaman only might discover. The cable, instead of stretching in a long declining line towards the water, was "short," or nearly "up and down," as it is equally termed in technical language, just "scope" enough being allowed out-board to resist the power of the lively tide, which acted on the deep keel of the vessel. All her boats were in the water, and so disposed and prepared, as to convince him they were in a state to be employed in towing, in the shortest possible time. Not a sail, nor a yard, was out of its place, undergoing those repairs and examinations which the mariner is wont to make so often, when lying within the security of a suitable haven; nor was there a single rope wanting, amid the hundreds which interlaced the blue sky that formed the background of the picture, that might be necessary, in bringing every art of facilitating motion into instant use. In short, the vessel, while seeming least prepared, was most in a condition to move, or, if necessary, to resort to her means of offence and defence. The boarding-nettings, it is true, were triced to the rigging, as on the previous day; but a sufficient apology was to be found for this act of extreme caution, in the war, which exposed her to attacks from the light French cruisers, that so often ranged, from the islands of the West-Indies, along the whole coast of the Continent, and in the position the ship had taken, without the ordinary defences of the harbour. In



this state, the vessel, to one who knew her real character, appeared like some beast of prey, or venomous reptile, that lay in an assumed lethargy, to delude the unconscious victim within the limits of its leap, or nigh enough to receive the deadly blow of its fangs.

Wilder shook his head, in a manner which said plainly enough how well he understood this treacherous tranquillity, and continued his walk towards the town, with the same deliberate step as before. He had whiled away many minutes unconsciously, and would probably have lost the reckoning of as many more, had not his attention been suddenly diverted by a slight touch on the shoulder. Starting at this unexpected diversion, he turned, and saw, that, in his dilatory progress, he had been overtaken by the seaman whom he had last seen in that very society in which he would have given so much to have been included himself.

"Your young limbs should carry you ahead, Master," said the latter, when he had succeeded in attracting the attention of Wilder, "like a 'Mudian going with a clean full, and yet I have fore-reached upon you with my old legs, in such a manner as to bring us again within hail."

"Perhaps you enjoy the extraordinary advantage of 'cutting the waves with your taffrail,'" returned Wilder, with a sneer. "There can be no accounting for the head-way one makes, when sailing in that remarkable manner."

"I see, brother, you are offended that I followed your motions, though, in so doing, I did no more than obey a signal of your own setting. Did you expect an old sea-dog like me, who has stood his watch so long in a flag-ship, to confess ignorance in any matter that of right belongs to blue water? How the devil was I to know that there is not some sort of craft, among the thousands that are getting



into fashion, which sails best stern foremost? They say a ship is modelled from a fish; and, if such be the case, it is only to make one after the fashion of a crab, or an oyster, to have the very thing you named."

"It is well, old man. You have had your reward, I suppose, in a handsome present from the Admiral's widow, and you may now lie-by for a season, without caring much as to the manner in which they build their ships in future. Pray, do you intend to shape your course much further down this hill?"

"Until I get to the bottom."

"I am glad of it, friend, for it is my especial intention to go up it again. As we say at sea, when our conversation is ended, 'A good time to you!'"

The old seaman laughed, in his chuckling manner, when he saw the young man turn abruptly on his heel, and begin to retrace the very ground along which he had just before descended.

"Ah! you have never sailed with a Rear-Admiral," he said, as he continued his own course in the former direction, picking his way with a care suited to his age and infirmities. "No, there is no getting the finish, even at sea, without a cruise or two under a flag, and that at the mizzen, too!"

"Intolerable old hypocrite!" muttered Wilder between his teeth. "The rascal has seen better days, and is now perverting his knowledge to juggle a foolish woman, to his profit. I am well quit of the knave, who, I dare say, has adopted lying for his trade, now labour is unproductive. I will go back. The coast is quite clear, and who can say what may happen next?"

Most of the foregoing paragraph was actually uttered in the suppressed manner already described, while the rest was merely meditated, which, considering the fact that our adventurer had no auditor,



was quite as well as if he had spoken it through a trumpet. The expectation thus vaguely expressed, however, was not likely to be soon realized. Wilder sauntered up the hill, endeavouring to assume the unconcerned air of an idler, if by chance his return should excite attention; but, though he lingered long in open view of the windows of Mrs de Lacey's villa, he was not able to catch another glimpse of its tenants. There were very evident symptoms of the approaching journey, in the trunks and packages that left the building for the town, and in the hurried and busy manner of the few servants that he occasionally saw; but it would seem that the principal personages of the establishment had withdrawn into the secret recesses of the building, probably for the very natural purpose of confidential communion and affectionate leave-taking. He was turning, vexed and disappointed, from his anxious and fruitless watch, when he once more heard female voices on the inner side of the low wall against which he had been leaning. The sounds approached; nor was it long before his quick ears again recognized the musical voice of Gertrude.

"It is tormenting ourselves, without sufficient reason, my dear Madam," she said, as the speakers drew sufficiently nigh to be distinctly overheard, "to allow any thing that may have fallen from such a—such an individual, to make the slightest impression."

"I feel the justice of what you say, my love," returned the mournful voice of her governess, "and yet am I so weak as to be unable entirely to shake off a sort of superstitious feeling on this subject. Gertrude, would you not wish to see that youth again?"

"Me, Ma'am!" exclaimed her élève, in a sort of alarm. "Why should you, or I, wish to see an utter stranger again? and one so low—not low



perhaps—but one who is surely not altogether a very suitable companion for”—

“Well-born ladies, you would say. And why do you imagine the young man to be so much our inferior?”

Wilder thought there was a melody in the intonations of the youthful voice of the maiden, which in some measure excused the personality, as she answered.

“I am certainly not so fastidious in my notions of birth and station as aunt de Lacey,” she said, laughing; “but I should forget some of your own instructions, dear Mrs Wyllys, did I not feel that education and manners make a sensible difference in the opinions and characters of all us poor mortals.”

“Very true, my child. But I confess I saw or heard nothing that induces me to believe the young man, of whom we are speaking, either uneducated or vulgar. On the contrary, his language and pronunciation were those of a gentleman, and his air was quite suited to his utterance. He had the frank and simple manner of his profession; but you are not now to learn that youths of the first families in the provinces, or even in the kingdom, are often placed in the service of the marine.”

“But they are officers, dear Madam: this—this individual wore the dress of a common mariner.”

“Not altogether. It was finer in its quality, and more tasteful in its fashion, than is customary. I have known Admirals do the same in their moments of relaxation. Sailors of condition often love to carry about them the testimonials of their profession, without any of the trappings of their rank.”

“You then think he was an officer—perhaps in the King’s service?”

“He might well have been so, though the fact, that there is no cruiser in the port, would seem to contradict it. But it was not so trifling a circum



stance that awakened the unaccountable interest that I feel. Gertrude, my love, it was my fortune to have been much with seamen in early life. I seldom see one of that age, and of that spirited and manly mien, without feeling emotion. But I tire you ; let us talk of other things."

"Not in the least, dear Madam," Gertrude hurriedly interrupted. "Since you think the stranger a gentleman, there can be no harm—that is, it is not quite so improper, I believe—to speak of him. Can there then be the danger he would make us think in trusting ourselves in a ship of which we have so good a report?"

"There was a strange, I had almost said wild, admixture of irony and concern in his manner, that is inexplicable! He certainly uttered nonsense part of the time; but, then, he did not appear to do it without a serious object. Gertrude, you are not as familiar with nautical expressions as myself; and perhaps you are ignorant that your good aunt, in her admiration of a profession that she has certainly a right to love, sometimes makes"—

"I know it—I know it; at least I often think so," the other interrupted, in a manner which plainly manifested that she found no pleasure in dwelling on the disagreeable subject. "It was exceedingly presuming, Madam, in a stranger, however, to amuse himself, if he did it, with so amiable and so trivial a weakness, if indeed weakness it be."

"It was," Mrs Wyllys steadily continued—she having, very evidently, such other matter in her thoughts as to be a little inattentive to the sensitive feelings of her companion;—"and yet he did not appear to me like one of those empty minds that find a pleasure in exposing the follies of others. You may remember, Gertrude, that yesterday, while at the ruin, Mrs de Lacey made some remarks expressive of her admiration of a ship under sail."



"Yes, yes, I remember them," said the niece, a little impatiently.

"One of her terms was particularly incorrect, as I happened to know from my own familiarity with the language of sailors."

"I thought as much, by the expression of your eye," returned Gertrude; "but"——

"Listen, my love. It certainly was not remarkable that a lady should make a trifling error in the use of so peculiar a language, but it is singular that a seaman himself should commit the same fault in precisely the same words. This did the youth of whom we are speaking; and, what is no less surprising, the old man assented to the same, just as if they had been correctly uttered."

"Perhaps," said Gertrude, in a low tone, "they may have heard, that attachment to this description of conversation is a foible of Mrs de Lacey. I am sure, after this, dear Madam, you cannot any longer consider the stranger a gentleman!"

"I should think no more about it, love, were it not for a feeling I can neither account for nor define. I would I could again see him!"

A slight exclamation from her companion interrupted her words; and, the next instant, the subject of her thoughts leaped the wall, apparently in quest of the rattan that had fallen at the feet of Gertrude, and occasioned her alarm. After apologizing for his intrusion on the private grounds of Mrs de Lacey, and recovering his lost property, Wilder was slowly preparing to retire, as if nothing had happened. There was a softness and delicacy in his manner, during the first moment of his appearance, which was probably intended to convince the younger of the ladies that he was not entirely without some claims to the title she had so recently denied him, and which was certainly not without its effect. The countenance of Mrs Wyllys was pale, and her lip



quivered, though the steadiness of her voice proved it was not with alarm, as she hastily said,—

“Remain a moment, sir, if need does not require your presence elsewhere. There is something so remarkable in this meeting, that I could wish to improve it.”

Wilder bowed, and again faced the ladies, whom he had just been about to quit, like one who felt he had no right to intrude a moment longer than had been necessary to recover that which had been lost by his pretended awkwardness. When Mrs Wyllys found that her wish was so unexpectedly realized, she hesitated as to the manner in which she should next proceed.

“I have been thus bold, sir,” she said, in some embarrassment, “on account of the opinion you so lately expressed concerning the vessel which now lies ready to put to sea, the instant she is favoured with a wind.”

“‘The Royal Caroline?’” Wilder carelessly replied.

“That is her name, I believe.”

“I hope, Madam, that nothing which I have said,” he hastily continued, “will have an effect to prejudice you against the ship. I will pledge myself that she is made of excellent materials, and then I have not the least doubt but she is very ably commanded.”

“And yet have you not hesitated to say, that you consider a passage in this very vessel more dangerous than one in any other ship that will probably leave a port of the Provinces in many months to come.”

“I did,” answered Wilder, with a manner not to be mistaken.

“Will you explain your reasons for this opinion?”

“If I remember rightly, I gave them to the lady whom I had the honour to see an hour ago.”

“That individual, sir, is no longer here” was the



grave reply of Wyllys ; “ neither is she to trust her person in the vessel. This young lady and myself, with our attendants, will be the only passengers.”

“ I understood it so,” returned Wilder, keeping his thoughtful gaze riveted on the speaking countenance of the deeply interested Gertrude.

“ And, now that there is no apprehension of any mistake, may I ask you to repeat the reasons why you think there will be danger in embarking in the ‘ Royal Caroline ? ’ ”

Wilder started, and even had the grace to colour, as he met the calm and attentive look of Mrs Wyllys’s searching, but placid eye.

“ You would not have me repeat, Madam,” he stammered, “ what I have already said on the subject ? ”

“ I would not, sir ; once will suffice for such an explanation ; still am I persuaded you have other reasons for your words.”

“ It is exceedingly difficult for a seaman to speak of ships in any other than technical language, which must be the next thing to being unintelligible to one of your sex and condition. You have never been at sea, Madam ? ”

“ Very often, sir.”

“ Then may I hope, possibly, to make myself understood. You must be conscious, Madam, that no small part of the safety of a ship depends on the very material point of keeping her right side uppermost : sailors call it ‘ making her stand up.’ Now, I need not say, I am quite sure, to a lady of your intelligence, that, if the ‘ Caroline ’ fall on her beam, there will be imminent hazard to all on board.”

“ Nothing can be clearer ; but would not the same risk be incurred in any other vessel ? ”

“ Without doubt, if any other vessel should trip. But I have pursued my profession for many years, without meeting with such a misfortune, but once. Then, the fastenings of the bowsprit”——



"Are good as ever came from the hand of rigger," said a voice behind them.

The whole party turned; and beheld, at a little distance, the old seaman already introduced, mounted on some object on the other side of the wall, against which he was very coolly leaning, and whence he overlooked the whole of the interior of the grounds.

"I have been at the water side to look at the boat, at the wish of Madam de Lacey, the widow of my late noble Commander and Admiral; and, let other men think as they may, I am ready to swear that the 'Royal Caroline' has as well secured a bowsprit as any ship that carries the British flag! Ay, nor is that all I will say in her favour; she is throughout neatly and lightly sparred, and has no more of a wall-side than the walls of yonder church tumble-home. I am an old man, and my reckoning has got to the last leaf of the log-book; therefore it is little interest that I have, or can have, in this brig or that schooner, but this much will I say, which is, that it is just as wicked, and as little likely to be forgiven, to speak scandal of a wholesome and stout ship, as it is to talk amiss of mortal Christian."

The old man spoke with energy, and a great show of honest indignation, which did not fail to make an impression on the ladies, at the same time that it brought certain ungrateful admonitions to the conscience of the understanding Wilder.

"You perceive, sir," said Mrs Wyllys, after waiting in vain for the reply of the young seaman, "that it is very possible for two men, of equal advantages, to disagree on a professional point. Which am I to believe?"

"Whichever your own excellent sense should tell you is most likely to be correct. I repeat, and in a sincerity to whose truth I call Heaven to witness, that



no mother or sister of mine should, with my consent, embark in the 'Caroline.'"

"This is incomprehensible!" said Mrs Wyllys, turning to Gertrude, and speaking only for her ear. "My reason tells me we have been trifled with by this young man; and yet are his protestations so earnest, and apparently so sincere, that I cannot shake off the impression they have made. To which of the two, my love, do you feel most inclined to yield your credence?"

"You know how very ignorant I am, dear Madam, of all these things," said Gertrude, dropping her eyes to the faded spig she was plucking; "but, to me, that old wretch has a very presuming and vicious look."

"You then think the younger most entitled to our belief?"

"Why not; since you, also, think he is a gentleman?"

"I know not that his superior situation in life entitles him to greater credit. Men often obtain such advantages only to abuse them.—I am afraid, sir," continued Mrs Wyllys, turning to the expecting Wilder, "that unless you see fit to be more frank, we shall be compelled to refuse you our faith, and still persevere in our intention to profit, by the opportunity of the 'Royal Caroline,' to get to the Carolinas."

"From the bottom of my heart, Madam, do I regret the determination."

"It may still be in your power to change it, by being explicit."

Wilder appeared to muse, and once or twice his lips moved, as if he were about to speak. Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude awaited his intentions with intense interest; but, after a long and seemingly hesitating pause, he disappointed both, by saying,—



"I am sorry that I have not the ability to make myself better understood. It can only be the fault of my dullness; for I again affirm that the danger is as apparent to my eyes as the sun at noon day."

"Then we must continue blind, sir," returned Mrs Wyllys, with a cold salute. "I thank you for your good and kind intentions, but you cannot blame us for not consenting to follow advice which is buried in so much obscurity. Although in our own grounds, we shall be pardoned the rudeness of leaving you. The hour appointed for our departure has now arrived."

Wilder returned the grave bow of Mrs Wyllys with one quite as formal as her own; though he bent with greater grace, and with more cordiality, to the deep but hurried curtesy of Gertrude Grayson. He remained in the precise spot, however, in which they left him, until he saw them enter the villa; and he even fancied he could catch the anxious expression of another timid glance which the latter threw in his direction, as her light form appeared to float from before his sight. Placing one hand on the wall, the young sailor then leaped into the highway. As his feet struck the ground, the slight shock seemed to awake him from his abstraction, and he became conscious that he stood within six feet of the old mariner, who had now twice stepped so rudely between him and the object he had so much at heart. The latter did not allow him time to give utterance to his disappointment; for he was the first himself to speak.

"Come, brother," he said, in friendly, confidential tones, and shaking his head, like one who wished to show to his companion that he was aware of the deception he had attempted to practise; "come, brother, you have stood far enough on this tack, and it is time to try another. Ay, I've been young myself in my time, and I know what a hard matter it



is to give the devil a wide birth, when there is fun to be found in sailing in his company: But old age brings us to our reckonings; and, when the life is getting on short allowance with a poor fellow, he begins to think of being sparing of his tricks, just as water is saved in a ship, when the calms set in, after it has been spilt about decks like rain, for weeks and months on end. Thought comes with gray hairs, and no one is the worse for providing a little of it among his other small stores."

"I had hoped, when I gave you the bottom of the hill, and took the top myself," returned Wilder, without even deigning to look at his disagreeable companion, "that we had parted company for ever. As you seem, however, to prefer the high ground, I leave you to enjoy it at your leisure; I shall descend into the town."

The old man shuffled after him, with a gait that rendered it difficult for Wilder, who was by this time in a fast walk, to outstrip him, without resorting to the undignified expedient of an actual flight. Vexed alike with himself and his tormentor, he was tempted to offer some violence to the latter; and then, recalled to his recollection by the dangerous impulse, he moderated his pace, and continued his route, with a calm determination to be superior to any emotions that such a pitiful object could excite.

"You were going under such a press of sail, young Master," said the stubborn old mariner, who still kept a pace or two in his rear, "that I had to set every thing to hold way with you; but you now seem to be getting reasonable, and we may as well lighten the passage by a little profitable talk. You had nearly made the oldish lady believe the good ship 'Royal Caroline' was the flying Dutchman!"

"And why did you see fit to undeceive her?" bluntly demanded Wilder.

"Would you have a man, who has followed blue



water fifty years, scandalize wood and iron after so wild a manner? The character of a ship is as dear to an old sea-dog, as the character of his wife or his sweetheart."

"Hark ye, friend; you live, I suppose, like other people, by eating and drinking?"

"A little of the first, and a good deal of the last," returned the other, with a chuckle.

"And you get both, like most seaman, by hard work, great risk, and the severest exposure?"

"Hum! 'Making our money like horses, and spending it like asses!'—that is said to be the way with us all."

"Now, then, have you an opportunity of making some with less labour; you may spend it to suit your own fancy. Will you engage in my service for a few hours, with this for your bounty, and as much more for wages, provided you deal honestly?"

The old man stretched out a hand, and took the guinea which Wilder had showed over his shoulder, without appearing to deem it at all necessary to face his recruit.

"It's no sham!" said the latter, stopping to ring the metal on a stone.

"'Tis gold, as pure as ever came from the Mint."

The other very coolly pocketed the coin; and then, with a certain hardened and decided way, as if he were now ready for any thing, he demanded,—

"What hen-roost am I to rob for this?"

"You are to do no such pitiful act; you have only to perform a little of that which, I fancy, you are no stranger to: Can you keep a false log?"

"Ay; and swear to it, on occasion. I understand you. You are tired of twisting the truth like a new laid rope, and you wish to turn the job over to me."

"Something so. You must unsay all you have said concerning yonder ship; and, as you have had cunning enough to get on the weather-side of Mrs



de Lacey, you must improve your advantage, by making matters a little worse than I have represented them to be. Tell me, that I may judge of your qualifications, did you, in truth, ever sail with the worthy Rear-Admiral?"

"As I am an honest and religious Christian, I never heard of the honest old man before yesterday. Oh! you may trust me in these matters! I am not likely to spoil a history for want of facts."

"I think you will do. Now listen to my plan."——

"Stop, worthy messmate," interrupted the other: "'Stones can hear,' they say on shore: we sailors know that the pumps have ears on board a ship: have you ever seen such a place as the 'Foul Anchor' tavern, in this town?"

"I have been there."

"I hope you like it well enough to go again. Here we will part. You shall haul on the wind, being the lightest sailer, and make a stretch or two among these houses, until you are well to windward of yonder church. You will then have plain sailing down upon hearty Joe Joram's, where is to be found as snug an anchorage, for an honest trader, as at any inn in the Colonies. I will keep away down this hill, and, considering the difference in our rate of sailing, we shall not be long after one another in port."

"And what is to be gained by so much manœuvring? Can you listen to nothing which is not steeped in rum?"

"You offend me by the word. You shall see what it is to send a sober messenger on your errands, when the time comes. But, suppose we are seen speaking to each other on the highway—why, as you are in such low repute just now, I shall lose my character with the ladies altogether."

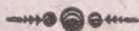
"There may be reason in that. Hasten, then, to



meet me ; for, as they spoke of embarking soon, there is not a minute to lose."

"No fear of their breaking ground so suddenly," returned the old man, holding the palm of his hand above his head to catch the wind. "There is not yet air enough to cool the burning cheeks of that young beauty ; and, depend on it, the signal will not be given to them until the sea breeze is fairly come in."

Wilder waved his hand, and stepped lightly along the road the other had indicated to him, ruminating on the figure which the fresh and youthful charms of Gertrude had extorted from one even as old and as coarse as his new ally. His companion followed his person for a moment, with an amused look, and an ironical cast of the eye ; and then he also quickened his pace, in order to reach the place of rendezvous in sufficient season.



## CHAPTER X.

"Forewarn him, that he use no scurrilous words."  
*Winter's Tale.*

As Wilder approached the "Foul Anchor," he beheld every symptom of some powerful excitement existing within the bosom of the hitherto peaceful town. More than half the women, and perhaps one fourth of all the men, within a reasonable proximity to that well known inn, were assembled before its door, listening to one of the former sex, who declaimed, in tones so shrill and penetrating, as not to leave the proprietors of the curious and attentive countenances, in the outer circle of the crowd, the smallest rational ground of complaint on the score of impartiality. Our adventurer hesitated, with the



sudden consciousness of one but newly embarked in such enterprises as that in which he had so recently enlisted, when he first saw these signs of commotion; nor did he determine to proceed until he caught a glimpse of his aged confederate, elbowing his way through the mass of bodies, with a perseverance and energy that promised to bring him right speedily into the very presence of her who uttered such loud and piercing plaints. Encouraged by this example, the young man advanced, but was content to take his position, for a moment, in a situation that left him entire command of his limbs, and, consequently, in a condition to make a timely retreat, should the latter measure prove at all expedient.

“I call on you, Earthly Potter, and you, Preserved Green, and you, Faithful Wanton,” cried Desire, as he came within hearing, pausing to catch a morsel of breath, before she proceeded in her affecting appeal to the neighbourhood; “and you too, Upright Crook, and you too, Relent Flint, and you, Wealthy Poor, to be witnesses and testimonials in my behalf. You, and all and each of you, can qualify, if need should be, that I have ever been a slaving and loving consort of this man who has deserted me in my age, leaving so many of his own children on my hands, to feed and to rear, besides”—

“What certainty is it,” interrupted the landlord of the “Foul Anchor” most inopportunately, “that the good-man has absconded? It was a merry day, the one that is just gone, and it is quite in reason to believe your husband was, like some others I can name—a thing I shall not be so unwise as to do—a little of what I call how-come-ye-so, and that his nap holds on longer than common. I’ll engage we shall all see the honest tailor creeping out of some of the barns shortly, as fresh and as ready for his bitters as if he had not wet his throat with



cold water since the last time of general rej'icing."

A low but pretty general laugh followed this effort of tavern wit, though it failed in exciting even a smile on the disturbed visage of Desire, which, by its doleful outline, appeared to have taken leave of all its risible properties for ever.

"Not he, not he," exclaimed the disconsolate consort of the good-man; "he has not the heart to get himself courageous, in loyal drinking, on such an occasion as a merry-making on account of his Majesty's glory; he was a man altogether for work; and it is chiefly for his hard labour that I have reason to complain. After being so long used to rely on his toil, it is a sore cross to a dependant woman to be thrown suddenly and altogether on herself for support. But I'll be revenged on him, if there's law to be found in Rhode Island, or in the Providence Plantations! Let him dare to keep his pitiful image out of my sight the lawful time, and then, when he returns, he shall find himself, as many a vagabond has been before him, without wife, as he will be without house to lay his graceless head in."\* Then, catching a glimpse of the inquiring face of the old seaman, who by this time had worked his way to her very side, she abruptly added, "Here is a stranger in the place, and one who has lately arrived! Did you meet a straggling runaway, friend, in your journey hither?"

"I had too much trouble in navigating my old hulk on dry land, to log the name and rate of every

\* It would seem, from this declaration, that certain legal antiquarians, who have contended that the community is indebted to Desire for the uncereemonious manner of clipping the nuptial knot, which is so well known to exist, even to this hour, in the community of which she was a member, are entirely in the wrong. It evidently did not take its rise in her example, since she clearly alludes to it, as a means before resorted to by the injured innocents of her own sex.



craft I fell in with," returned the other, with infinite composure; "and yet, now you speak of such a thing, I do remember to have come within hail of a poor fellow, just about the beginning of the morning-watch, somewhere hereaway, up in the bushes between this town and the bit of a ferry that carries one on to the main."

"What sort of a man was he?" demanded five or six anxious voices, in a breath; among which the tones of Desire, however, maintained their supremacy, rising above those of all the others, like the strains of a first-rate artist flourishing a quaver above the more modest thrills of the rest of the troupe.

"What sort of a man! Why a fellow with his arms rigged athwart ship, and his legs stepped like those of all other Christians, to be sure: but, now you speak of it, I remember that he had a bit of a sheep-shank in one of his legs, and rolled a good deal as he went ahead."

"It was he!" added the same chorus of voices. Five or six of the speakers instantly stole slyly out of the throng, with the commendable intention of hurrying after the delinquent, in order to secure the payment of certain small balances of account, in which the unhappy and much traduced good-man stood indebted to the several parties. Had we leisure to record the manner in which these praiseworthy efforts, to save an honest penny, were conducted, the reader might find much subject of amusement in the secret diligence with which each worthy tradesman endeavoured to outwit his neighbour, on the occasion, as well as in the cunning subterfuges which were adopted to veil their real designs, when all met at the ferry, deceived and disappointed in their object. As Desire, however, had neither legal demand on, nor hope of favour from, her truant husband, she was content to pursue, on the spot, such further inquiries in behalf of the fugitive as she saw fit to make.



It is possible the pleasures of freedom, in the shape of the contemplated divorce, were already floating before her active mind, with the soothing perspective of second nuptials, backed by the influence of such another picture as might be drawn from the recollections of her first love; the whole having a manifest tendency to pacify her awakened spirit, and to give a certain portion of directness and energy to her subsequent interrogatories.

“Had he a thieving look?” she demanded, without attending to the manner in which she was so suddenly deserted by all those who had just expressed the strongest sympathy in her loss. “Was he a man that had the air of a sneaking runaway?”

“As for his head-piece, I will not engage to give a very true account,” returned the old mariner; “though he had the look of one who had been kept, a good deal of his time, in the lee scuppers. If I should give an opinion, the poor devil has had too much”——

“Idle time, you would say; yes, yes; it has been his misfortune to be out of work a good deal latterly, and wickedness has got into his head, for want of something better to think of. Too much”——

“Wife,” interrupted the old man, emphatically. Another general, and far less equivocal laugh, at the expense of Desire, succeeded this blunt declaration. Nothing intimidated by such a manifest assent to the opinion of the hardy seaman, the undaunted virago resumed,——

“Ah! you little know the suffering and forbearance I have endured with the man in so many long years. Had the fellow you met the look of one who had left an injured woman behind him?”

“I can’t say there was any thing about him which said, in so many words, that the woman he had left at her moorings was more or less injured;” returned the tar, with commendable discrimination, “but there



was enough about him to show, that, however and wherever he may have stowed his wife, if wife she was, he had not seen fit to leave all her outfit at home. The man had plenty of female-toggery around his neck; I suppose he found it more agreeable than her arms."

"What!" exclaimed Desire, looking aghast; "has he dared to rob me! What had he of mine? not the gold beads!"

"I'll not swear they were no sham."

"The villain!" continued the enraged termagant, catching her breath like a person that had just been submerged in water longer than is agreeable to human nature, and forcing her way through the crowd, with such vigour as soon to be in a situation to fly to her secret hordes, in order to ascertain the extent of her misfortune; "the sacrilegious villain! to rob the wife of his bosom, the mother of his own children, and"——

"Well, well," again interrupted the landlord of the 'Foul Anchor,' with his unseasonable voice, "I never before heard the good-man suspected of roguery, though the neighbourhood was ever backward in calling him chicken-hearted."

The old seaman looked the publican full in the face, with much meaning in his eye, as he answered,—

"If the honest tailor never robbed any but that virago, there would be no great thieving sin to be laid to his account; for every bead he had about him wouldn't serve to pay his ferryage. I could carry all the gold on his neck in my eye, and see none the worse for its company. But it is a shame to stop the entrance into a licensed tavern, with such a mob, as if it were an embargoed port; and so I have sent the woman after her valuables, and all the idlers, as you see, in her wake."



Joe Joram gazed on the speaker like a man enthralled by some mysterious charm; neither answering, nor altering the direction of his eye, for near a minute. Then, suddenly breaking out in a deep and powerful laugh, as if he were not backward in enjoying the artifice, which certainly had produced the effect of removing the crowd from his own door to that of the absent tailor, he flourished his arm in the way of greeting, and exclaimed,—

“Welcome, tarry Bob; welcome, old boy, welcome! From what cloud have you fallen? and before what wind have you been running, that Newport is again your harbour?”

“Too many questions to be answered in an open roadstead, friend Joram; and altogether too dry a subject for a husky conversation. When I am birthed in one of your inner cabins, with a mug of flip and a kid of good Rhode Island beef within grappling distance, why, as many questions as you choose, and as many answers, you know, as suits my appetite.”

“And who’s to pay the piper, honest Bob? whose ship’s purser will pay your check now?” continued the publican, showing the old sailor in, however, with a readiness that seemed to contradict the doubt, expressed by his words, of any reward for such extraordinary civility.

“Who?” interrupted the other, displaying the money so lately received from Wilder, in such a manner that it might be seen by the few by-standers who remained, as though he would himself furnish a sufficient apology for the distinguished manner in which he was received; “who but this gentleman? I can boast of being backed by the countenance of his Sacred Majesty himself, God bless him!”

“God bless him!” echoed several of the loyal lieges; and that too in a place which has since



heard such very different cries, and where the same words would now excite nearly as much surprise, though far less alarm, than an earthquake.

"God bless him!" repeated Joram, opening the door of an inner room, and pointing the way to his customer, "and all that are favored with his countenance! Walk in, old Bob, and you shall soon grapple with half an ox."

Wilder, who had approached the outer door of the tavern as the mob receded, witnessed the retreat of the two worthies into the recesses of the house, and immediately entered the bar-room himself. While deliberating on the manner in which he should arrive at a communication with his new confederate, without attracting too much attention to so odd an association, the landlord returned in person to relieve him. After casting a hasty glance around the apartment, his look settled on our adventurer, whom he approached in a manner half-doubting, half-decided.

"What success, sir, in looking for a ship?" he demanded, now recognizing, for the first time, the stranger with whom he had before held converse that morning. "More hands than places to employ them?"

"I am not sure it will so prove. In my walk on the hill, I met an old seaman, who"—

"Hum!" interrupted the publican, with an intelligible, though stolen, sign to follow. "You will find it more convenient, sir, to take your breakfast in another room." Wilder followed his conductor, who left the public apartment by a different door from that by which he had led his other guest into the interior of the house, wondering at the air of mystery that the innkeeper saw fit to assume on the occasion. After leading him by a circuitous passage, the latter showed Wilder, in profound silence, up a private stair-way, into the very attic of the build-



ing. Here he rapped lightly at a door, and was bid to enter, by a voice that caused our adventurer to start by its deepness and severity. On finding himself, however, in a low and confined room, he saw no other occupant than the seaman who had just been greeted by the publican as an old acquaintance, and by a name to which he might, by his attire, well lay claim to be entitled—that of tarry Bob. While Wilder was staring about him, a good deal surprised at the situation in which he was placed, the landlord retired, and he found himself alone with his confederate. The latter was already engaged in discussing the fragment of the ox, just mentioned, and in quaffing of some liquid that seemed equally adapted to his taste, although sufficient time had not certainly been allowed to prepare the beverage he had seen fit to order. Without allowing his visiter leisure for much further reflection, the old mariner made a motion to him to take the only vacant chair in the room, while he continued his employment on the surloin with as much assiduity as though no interruption had taken place.

“Honest Joe Joram always makes a friend of his butcher,” he said, after ending a draught that threatened to drain the mug to the bottom. “There is such a flavour about his beef, that one might mistake it for the fin of a halibut. You have been in foreign parts, shipmate, or I may call you ‘messmate,’ since we are both anchored nigh the same kid—but you have doubtless been in foreign countries?”

“Often; I should else be but a miserable seaman.”

“Then, tell me frankly, have you ever been in the kingdom that can furnish such rations—fish, flesh, fowl, and fruits—as this very noble land of America, in which we are now both moored? and in which I suppose we both of us were born?”

“It would be carrying the love of home a little



too far, to believe in such universal superiority," returned Wilder, willing to divert the conversation from his real object, until he had time to arrange his ideas, and assure himself he had no other auditor but his visible companion. "It is generally admitted that England excels us in all these articles."

"By whom? by your know-nothings and bold talkers. But I, a man who has seen the four quarter of the earth, and no small part of the water besides, give the lie to such empty boasters. We are colonies, friend, we are colonies; and it is as bold in a colony to tell the mother that it has the advantage, in this or that particular, as it would be in a foremast Jack to tell his officer he was wrong, though he knew it to be true. I am but a poor man, Mr— By what name may I call your Honour?"

"Me! my name?—Harris."

"I am but a poor man, Mr Harris; but I have had charge of a watch in my time, old and rusty as I seem, nor have I spent so many long nights on deck without keeping thoughts at work, though I may not have overhaul'd as much philosophy, in so doing, as a paid parish priest, or a fee'd lawyer. Let me tell you, it is a disheartening thing to be nothing but a dweller in a colony. It keeps down the pride and spirit of a man, and lends a hand in making him what his masters would be glad to have him. I shall say nothing of fruits, and meats, and other eatables, that come from the land of which both you and I have heard and know too much, unless it be to point to yonder sun, and then to ask the question, whether you think King George has the power to make it shine on the bit of an island where he lives, as it shines here in his broad provinces of America?"

"Certainly not: and yet you know that every one allows that the productions of England are so much superior"—

"Ay, ay; a colony always sails under the lee of



its mother. Talk does it all, friend Harris. Talk, talk, talk; a man can talk himself into a fever, or set a ship's company by the ears. He can talk a cherry into a peach, or a flounder into a whale. Now here is the whole of this long coast of America, and all her rivers, and lakes, and brooks, swarming with such treasures as any man might fatten on, and yet his Majesty's servants, who come among us, talk of their turbots, and their sole, and their carp, as if the Lord had only made such fish, and the devil had let the others slip through his fingers, without asking leave."

Wilder turned, and fastened a look of surprise on the old man, who continued to eat, however, as if he had uttered nothing but what might be considered as a matter of course opinion.

"You are more attached to your birth-place than loyal, friend," said the young mariner, a little austere.

"I am not fish-loyal at least. What the Lord made, one may speak of, I hope, without offence. As to the Government, that is a rope twisted by the hands of man, and"—

"And what?" demanded Wilder, perceiving that the other hesitated.

"Hum! Why, I fancy man will undo his own work, when he can find nothing better to busy himself in. No harm in saying that either, I hope?"

"So much, that I must call your attention to the business that has brought us together. You have not so soon forgotten the earnest-money you received?"

The old sailor shoved the dish from before him, and, folding his arms, he looked his companion full in the eye, as he calmly answered,—

"When I am fairly enlisted in a service, I am a man to be counted on. I hope you sail under the same colors, friend Harris?"

"It would be dishonest to be otherwise. There



is one thing you will excuse, before I proceed to detail my plans and wishes : I must take occasion to examine this closet, in order to be sure that we are actually alone."

"You will find little there except the toggery of some of honest Joe's female gender. As the door is not fastened with any extraordinary care, you have only to look for yourself, since seeing is believing."

Wilder did not seem disposed to wait for this permission ; he opened the door, even while the other was speaking, and, finding that the closet actually contained little else than the articles named by his companion, he turned away, like a man who was disappointed.

"Were you alone when I entered?" he demanded, after a thoughtful pause of a moment.

"Honest Joram, and yourself."

"But no one else?"

"None that I saw," returned the other, with a manner that betrayed a slight uneasiness ; "if you think otherwise, let us overhaul the room. Should my hand fall on a listener, the salute will not be light."

"Hold—answer me one question ; who bade me enter?"

Tarry Bob, who had arisen with a good deal of alacrity, now reflected in his turn for an instant, and then he closed his musing, by indulging in a low laugh.

"Ah ! I see that you have got your ideas a little jammed. A man cannot talk the same, with a small portion of ox in his mouth, as though his tongue had as much sea-room as a ship four-and-twenty hours out."

"Then, you spoke?"

"I'll swear to that much," returned Bob, resuming his seat like one who had settled the whole affair to his entire satisfaction ; "and now, friend Har-



ris, if you are ready to lay bare your mind, I'm just as ready to look at it."

Wilder did not appear to be quite as well content with the explanation as his companion, but he drew a chair, and prepared to open his subject.

"I am not to tell you, friend, after what you have heard and seen, that I have no very strong desire that the lady with whom we have both spoken this morning, and her companion, should sail in the 'Royal Caroline.' I suppose it is enough for our purposes that you should know the fact; the reason why I prefer they should remain where they are, can be of no moment as to the duty you are to undertake."

"You need not tell an old seaman how to gather in the slack of a running idea!" cried Bob, chuckling and winking at his companion in a way that displeased the latter by its familiarity; "I have not lived fifty years on blue water, to mistake it for the skies."

"You then fancy, sir, that my motive is no secret to you?"

"It needs no spy-glass to see, that, while the old people say, 'Go,' the young people would like to stay where they are."

"You do both of the young people much injustice, then; for, until yesterday, I never laid eyes on the person you mean."

"Ah! I see how it is; the owners of the 'Caroline' have not been so civil as they ought, and you are paying them a small debt of thanks!"

"That is possibly a means of retaliation that might suit your taste," said Wilder, gravely; "but which is not much in accordance with mine. The whole of the parties are utter strangers to me."

"Hum! Then I suppose you belong to the vessel in the outer harbour; and, though you don't hate your enemies, you love your friends. We must con



to be the means to coax the ladies to take passage in the slaver."

"God forbid!"

"God forbid! Now I think, friend Harris, you set up the backstays of your conscience a little too taught. Though I cannot, and do not, agree with you in all you have said concerning the 'Royal Caroline,' I see no reason to doubt but we shall have but one mind about the other vessel. I call her a wholesome looking and well proportioned craft, and one that a King might sail in with comfort."

"I deny it not; still I like her not."

"Well, I am glad of that; and, since the matter is fairly before us, master Harris, I have a word or two to say concerning that very ship. I am an old sea-dog, and one not easily blinded in matters of the trade. Do you not find something, that is not in character for an honest trader, in the manner in which they have laid that vessel at her anchors, without the fort, and the sleepy look she bears, at the same time that any one may see she is not built to catch oysters, or to carry cattle to the islands?"

"As you have said, I think her a wholesome and a tight-built ship. Of what evil practice, however, do you suspect her?—perhaps she robs the revenue?"

"Hum! I am not sure it would be pleasant to smuggle in such a vessel, though your contraband is a merry trade, after all. She has a pretty battery, as well as one can see from this distance."

"I dare say her owners are not tired of her yet, and would gladly keep her from falling into the hands of the French."

"Well, well, I may be wrong; but, unless sight is going with my years, all is not as it would be on board that slaver, provided her papers were true, and she had the lawful name to her letters of marque. What think you, honest Joe, in this matter?"

Wilder turned, impatiently, and found that the



landlord had entered the room, with a step so light as to have escaped his attention, which had been drawn to his companion with a force that the reader will readily comprehend. The air of surprise, with which Joram regarded the speaker, was certainly not affected; for the question was repeated, and in still more definite terms, before he saw fit to reply.

"I ask you, honest Joe, if you think the slaver, in the outer harbour of this port, a true man?"

"You come across one, Bob, in your bold way, with such startling questions," returned the publican, casting his eyes obliquely around him, as if he would fain make sure of the character of the audience to which he spoke, "such stirring opinions, that really I am often non-plushed to know how to get the ideas together, to make a saving answer."

"It is droll enough, truly, to see the landlord of the 'Foul Anchor' dumb-founded," returned the old man, with perfect composure in mien and eye. "I ask you, if you do not suspect something wrong about that slaver?"

"Wrong! Good heavens, mister Robert, recollect what you are saying. I would not, for the custom of his Majesty's Lord High Admiral, have any discouraging words be uttered in my house against the reputation of any virtuous and fair-dealing slavers! The Lord protect me from blacking the character of any honest subject of the King!"

"Do you see nothing wrong, worthy and tender Joram, about the ship in the outer harbour?" repeated mister Robert, without moving eye, limb, or muscle.

"Well, since you press me so hard for an opinion, and seeing that you are a customer who pays freely for what he orders, I will say, that, if there is any thing unreasonable, or even illegal, in the deportment of the gentlemen"——

"You sail so nigh the wind, friend Joram," coolly



interrupted the old man, "as to keep every thing shaking. Just bethink you of a plain answer: Have you seen any thing wrong about the slaver?"

"Nothing, on my conscience, then," said the publican, puffing not unlike a cetaceous fish that had come to the surface to breathe; "as I am an unworthy sinner, sitting under the preaching of good and faithful Dr Dogma, nothing—nothing."

"No! Then are you a duller man than I had rated you at! Do you *suspect* nothing?"

"Heaven protect me from suspicions! The devil besets all our minds with doubts; but weak, and evil inclined, is he who submits to them. The officers and crew of that ship are free drinkers, and as generous as princes: Moreover, as they never forget to clear the score before they leave the house, I call them—honest!"

"And I call them—pirates!"

"Pirates!" echoed Joram, fastening his eye, with marked distrust, on the countenance of the attentive Wilder. "'Pirate' is a harsh word, mister Robert, and should not be thrown in any gentleman's face, without testimony enough to clear one in an action of defamation, should such a thing get fairly before twelve sworn and conscientious men. But I suppose you know what you say, and before whom you say it."

"I do; and now, as it seems that your opinion in this matter amounts to just nothing at all, you will please"—

"To do any thing you order," cried Joram, very evidently delighted to change the subject.

"To go and ask the customers below if they are dry," continued the other, beckoning for the publican to retire by the way he entered, with the air of one who felt certain of being obeyed. As soon as the door was closed on the retiring landlord, he turned to his remaining companion, and continued, "You



seem as much struck aback as unbelieving Joe himself, at what you have just heard."

"It is a harsh suspicion, and should be well supported, old man, before you venture to repeat it. What pirate has lately been heard of on this coast?"

"There is the well-known Red Rover," returned the other, dropping his voice, and casting a furtive look around him, as if even he thought extraordinary caution was necessary in uttering the formidable name.

"But he is said to keep chiefly in the Caribbean Sea."

"He is a man to be any where, and every where. The King would pay him well who put the rogue into the hands of the law."

"A thing easier planned than executed," Wilder thoughtfully answered.

"That is as it may be. I am an old fellow, and fitter to point out the way than to go ahead. But you are like a newly fitted ship, with all your rigging tight, and your spars without a warp in them. What say you to make your fortune by selling the knaves to the King? It is only giving the devil his own a few months sooner or later."

Wilder started, and turned away from his companion like one who was little pleased by the manner in which he expressed himself. Perceiving the necessity of a reply, however, he demanded,—

"And what reason have you for believing your suspicions true? or what means have you for effecting your object, if true, in the absence of the royal cruisers?"

"I cannot swear that I am right; but, if sailing on the wrong tack, we can only go about, when we find out the mistake. As to means, I confess they are easier named than mustered."

"Go, go; this is idle talk; a mere whim of your old brain," said Wilder, coldly; "and the less said

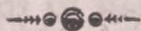


the soonest mended. All this time we are forgetting our proper business. I am half inclined to think, mister Robert, you are holding out false lights, in order to get rid of the duty for which you are already half paid."

There was a look of satisfaction in the countenance of the old tar, while Wilder was speaking, that might have struck his companion, had not the young man risen, while speaking, to pace the narrow room, with a thoughtful and hurried step.

"Well, well," the former rejoined, endeavouring to disguise his evident contentment, in his customary, selfish, but shrewd expression, "I am an old dreamer, and often have I thought myself swimming in the sea when I have been safe moored on dry land! I believe there must soon be a reckoning with the devil, in order that each may take his share of my poor carcass, and I be left the Captain of my own ship. Now for your Honour's orders."

Wilder returned to his seat, and disposed himself to give the necessary instructions to his confederate, in order that he might counteract all he had already said in favour of the outward-bound vessel.



## CHAPTER XI.

———"The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient;—three thousand ducats;—I think I may take his bond."—*Merchant of Venice*.

As the day advanced, the appearances of a fresh sea breeze setting in gradually grew stronger; and, with the increase of the wind, were to be seen all the symptoms of an intention to leave the harbour on the part of the Bristol trader. The sailing of a large ship was an event of much more importance in an American port, sixty years ago, than at the



present hour, when a score is frequently seen to arrive and depart from one haven in a single day. Although claiming to be inhabitants of one of the principal towns of the colony, the good people of Newport did not witness the movements on board the "Caroline" with that species of indolent regard which is the fruit of satiety in sights as well as in graver things, and with which, in the course of time, the evolutions of even a fleet come to be contemplated. On the contrary, the wharves were crowded with boys, and indeed with idlers of every growth. Even many of the more considerate and industrious of the citizens were seen loosening the close grasp they usually kept on the precious minutes, and allowing them to escape uncounted, though not entirely unheeded, as they yielded to the ascendancy of curiosity over interest, and strayed from their shops, and their work-yards, to gaze upon the noble spectacle of a moving ship.

The tardy manner in which the crew of the "Caroline" made their preparations, however, exhausted the patience of more than one time-saving citizen. Quite as many of the better sort of the spectators had left the wharves as still remained, and yet the vessel spread to the breeze but the solitary sheet of canvas which has been already named. Instead of answering the wishes of hundreds of weary eyes, the noble ship was seen sheering about her anchor, inclining from the passing wind, as her bows were alternately turned to the right and to the left, like a restless courser restrained by the grasp of the groom, chafing his bit, and with difficulty keeping those limbs upon the earth with which he is shortly to bound around the ring. After more than an hour of unaccountable delay, a rumour was spread among the crowd that an accident had occurred, by which some important individual, belonging to the complement of the vessel, was severely injured.



But this rumour passed away also, and was nearly forgotten, when a sheet of flame was seen issuing from a bow-port of the "Caroline," driving before it a cloud of curling and mounting smoke, and which was succeeded by the instant roar of a discharge of artillery. A bustle, like that which usually precedes the immediate announcement of any long attended event, took place among the weary expectants on the land, and every one now felt certain, that, whatever might have occurred, it was settled that the ship should proceed.

Of all this delay, the several movements on board, the subsequent signal of sailing, and of the impatience in the crowd, Wilder had been a grave and close observer. Posted with his back against the upright fluke of a condemned anchor, on a wharf a little apart from that occupied by most of the other spectators, he had remained an hour in the same position, scarcely bending his look to his right hand or to his left. When the gun was fired he started, not with the nervous impulse which had made a hundred others do precisely the same thing, but to turn an anxious and rapid glance along the streets that came within the range of his eye. From this hasty and uneasy examination, he soon returned into his former reclining posture, though the wandering of his glances, and the whole expression of his meaning countenance, would have told an observer that some event, to which the young mariner looked forward with excessive interest, was on the eve of its consummation. As minute after minute, however, rolled by, his composure was gradually restored, and a smile of satisfaction lighted his features, while his lips moved like those of a man who expressed his pleasure in a soliloquy. It was in the midst of these agreeable meditations, that the sound of many voices met his ears; and, turning, he saw a large party within a few yards of where he stood. He was not



slow to detect among them the forms of Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude, attired in such a manner as to leave no doubt that they were at length on the eve of embarking.

A cloud, driving before the sun, does not produce a greater change in the aspect of the earth, than was wrought in the expression of Wilder's countenance, by this unexpected sight. He was just implicitly relying on the success of an artifice, which, though sufficiently shallow, he flattered himself was deep enough to act on the timidity and credulity of woman; and, now, was he suddenly awoke from his self-gratulation, to prove the utter disappointment of his hopes. Muttering a suppressed but deep execration against the perfidy of his confederate, he shrunk as much as possible behind the fluke of the anchor, and fastened his eyes sullenly on the ship.

The party which accompanied the travellers to the water side was, like all other parties made to take leave of valued friends, taciturn and restless. Those who spoke, did so with a rapid and impatient utterance, as though they wished to hurry the very separation they regretted; and the features of those who said nothing looked full of meaning. Wilder heard several affectionate and warm-hearted wishes given, and promises extorted, from youthful voices, all of which were answered in the soft and mournful tones of Gertrude, and yet he obstinately refused to bend even a stolen look in the direction of the speakers.

At length, a footstep, within a few feet of him, induced a hasty glance aside. His eye met that of Mrs Wyllys. The lady started, as well as our young mariner, at the sudden recognition; but, recovering her self-possession, she observed, with admirable coolness,—

“You perceive, sir, that we are not to be deter-



red from an enterprise once undertaken, by any ordinary dangers."

"I hope you may not have reason, Madam, to repent your courage."

A short, but painfully thoughtful pause succeeded, on the part of Mrs Wyllys. Casting a look behind her, in order to ascertain that she was not overheard, she drew a step nigher to the youth, and said, in a voice even lower than before,—

"It is not yet too late: Give me but the shadow of a reason for what you have said, and I will wait for another ship. My feelings are foolishly inclined to believe you, young man, though my judgment tells me there is but too much probability that you trifle with our womanish fears."

"Trifle! On such a matter I would trifle with none of your sex; and least of all with you!"

"This is extraordinary! For a stranger it is inexplicable! Have you a fact, or a reason, which I can plead to the friends of my young charge?"

"You know them already."

"Then, sir, am I compelled, against my will, to believe your motive is one that you have some powerful considerations for wishing to conceal," coolly returned the disappointed and even mortified governess. "For your own sake, I hope it is not unworthy. I thank you for all that is well intended; if you have spoken aught which is otherwise, I forgive it."

They parted, with the restraint of people who feel that distrust exists between them. Wilder again shrunk behind his cover, maintaining a proud position, and a countenance that was grave to austerity. His situation, however, compelled him to become an auditor of most of what was now said.

The principal speaker, as was meet on such an occasion, was Mrs de Lacey, whose voice was often raised in sage admonitions and professional opinions, blended in a manner that all would admire, though



none of her sex, but they who had enjoyed the singular good fortune of sharing in the intimate confidence of a flag-officer, might ever hope to imitate.

“And now, my dearest niece,” concluded the relict of the Rear-Admiral, after exhausting her breath, and her store of wisdom, in numberless exhortations to be careful of her health, to write often, to repeat the actual words of her private message to her brother the General, to keep below in gales of wind, to be particular in the account of any extraordinary sight she might have the good fortune to behold in the passage, and, in short, in all other matters likely to grow out of such a leave-taking; “and now, my dearest niece, I commit you to the mighty deep, and One far mightier—to Him who made it. Banish from your thoughts all recollections of any thing you may have heard concerning the imperfections of the ‘Royal Caroline;’ for the opinion of the aged seaman, who sailed with the lamented Admiral, assures me they are all founded in mistake.” [“The treacherous villain!” muttered Wilder.] “Who spoke?” said Mrs de Lacey; but, receiving no reply, she continued; “His opinion is also exactly in accordance with my own, on more mature reflection. To be sure, it is a culpable neglect to depend on bobstays and gammonings for the security of the bow-sprit, but still even this is an oversight which, as my old friend has just told me, may be remedied by ‘preventers and lashings.’ I have written a note to the Master,—Gertrude, my dear, be careful ever to call the Master of the ship *Mister* Nichols; for none, but such as bear his Majesty’s commission, are entitled to be termed *Captains*; it is an honourable station, and should always be treated with reverence, it being, in fact, next in rank to a flag-officer,—I have written a note to the Master on the subject, and he will see the neglect repaired; and so, my love, God bless you; take the



best possible care of yourself; write me by every opportunity; remember my kindest love to your father, and be very minute in your description of the whales."

The eyes of the worthy and kind-hearted widow were filled with tears as she ended; and there was a touch of nature, in the tremour of her voice, that produced a sympathetic feeling in all who heard her words. The final parting took place under the impression of these kind emotions; and, before another minute, the oars of the boat, which bore the travelers to the ship, were heard in the water.

Wilder listened to the well-known sounds with a feverish interest, that he possibly might have found it difficult to explain even to himself. A light touch on the elbow first drew his attention from the disagreeable subject. Surprised at the circumstance, he faced the intruder, who appeared to be a lad of apparently some fifteen years. A second look was necessary, to tell the abstracted young mariner that he again saw the attendant of the Rover; he who has already been introduced in our pages under the name of Roderick.

"Your pleasure?" he demanded, when his amazement, at being thus interrupted in his meditations, had a little subsided.

"I am directed to put these orders into your own hands," was the answer.

"Orders!" repeated the young man, with a curling lip. "The authority should be respected which issues its mandates through such a messenger."

"The authority is one that it has ever proved dangerous to disobey," gravely returned the boy.

"Indeed! Then will I look into the contents without delay, lest I fall into some fatal negligence. Are you bid to wait an answer?"

On raising his eyes from the note the other had given him, after breaking its seal, the young man



found that the messenger had already vanished. Perceiving how useless it would be to pursue so light a form, amid the mazes of lumber that loaded the wharf, and most of the adjacent shore, he opened the letter and read as follows :—

“ An accident has disabled the Master of the outward-bound ship called the ‘ Royal Caroline ! ’ Her consignee is reluctant to intrust her to the officer next in rank ; but sail she must. I find she has credit for her speed. If you have any credentials of *character* and *competency*, profit by the occasion, and earn the station you are finally destined to fill. You have been named to some who are interested, and you have been sought diligently. If this reach you in season, be on the alert, and be decided. Show no surprise at any co-operation you may unexpectedly meet. My agents are more numerous than you had believed. The reason is obvious ; gold is yellow, though I am

“ RED.”

The signature, the matter, and the style of this letter, left Wilder in no doubt as to its author. Casting a glance around him, he sprang into a skiff ; and, before the boat of the travellers had reached the ship, that of Wilder had skimmed the water over half the distance between her and the land. As he plied his skulls with vigorous and skilful arms, he soon stood upon her decks. Forcing his way among the crowd of attendants from the shore, that are apt to cumber a departing ship, he reached the part of the vessel where a circle of busy and anxious faces told him he should find those most concerned in her fate. Until now, he had hardly breathed clearly, much less reflected on the character of his sudden enterprise. It was too late, however, to retreat, had he been so disposed, or to abandon his purpose, with-



out incurring the hazard of exciting dangerous suspicions. A single instant served to recal his thoughts, ere he demanded,—

“Do I see the owner of the ‘Caroline?’”

“The ship is consigned to our house,” returned a sedate, deliberate, and shrewd-looking individual, in the attire of a wealthy, but also of a thrifty, trader.

“I have heard that you have need of an experienced officer.”

“Experienced officers are comfortable things to an owner in a vessel of value,” returned the merchant. “I hope the ‘Caroline’ is not without her portion.”

“But I had heard, one to supply her Commander’s place, for a time, was greatly needed?”

“If her Commander were incapable of doing his duty, such a thing might certainly come to pass. Are you seeking a birth?”

“I have come to apply for the vacancy.”

“It would have been wiser, had you first ascertained there existed a vacancy to fill. But you have not come to ask authority, in such a ship as this, without sufficient testimony of your ability and fitness?”

“I hope these documents may prove satisfactory,” said Wilder, placing in his hands a couple of unsealed letters.

During the time the other was reading the certificates, for such they proved to be, his shrewd eye was looking over his spectacles at the subject of their contents, and returning to the paper, in alternate glances, in such a way as to render it very evident that he was endeavouring to assure himself of the fidelity of the words he read, by actual observation.

“Hum! This is certainly very excellent testimony in your favour, young gentleman; and—coming, as it does, from two so respectable and affluent houses as Spriggs, Boggs and Tweed, and Hammer and Hacket



—entitled to great credit. A richer and broader-bottomed firm than the former, is not to be found in all his Majesty's colonies; and I have great respect for the latter, though envious people do say that they over-trade a little."

"Since, then, you esteem them so highly, I shall not be considered hasty in presuming on their friendship."

"Not at all, not at all, Mr ——a—a"—glancing his eye again into one of the letters; "ay—Mr Wilder; there is never any presumption in a fair offer, in a matter of business. Without offers to sell and offers to buy, our property would never change hands, sir, ha! ha! ha! never change to a profit, you know, young gentleman."

"I am aware of the truth of what you say, and therefore I beg leave to repeat my offer."

"All perfectly fair and perfectly reasonable. But you cannot expect us, Mr Wilder, to make a vacancy expressly for you to fill, though it must be admitted that your papers are excellent—as good as the note of Spriggs, Boggs and Tweed themselves—not to make a vacancy expressly"——

"I had supposed the Master of the ship so seriously injured"——

"Injured, but not seriously," interrupted the wary consignee, glancing his eye around at sundry shippers, and one or two spectators, who were within ear-shot; "injured certainly, but not so much as to quit the vessel. No, no, gentlemen; the good ship 'Royal Caroline' proceeds on her voyage, as usual, under the care of that old and well-tried mariner, Nicholas Nichols."

"Then, sir, am I sorry to have intruded on your time at so busy a moment," said Wilder, bowing with a disappointed air, and falling back a step, as if about to withdraw.

"Not so hasty—not so hasty; bargains are not to



be concluded, young man, as you let a sail fall from the yard. It is possible that your services may be of use, though not perhaps in the responsible situation of Master. At what rate do you value the title of 'Captain?' "

"I care little for the name, provided the trust and the authority are mine."

"A very sensible youth!" muttered the discreet merchant; "and one who knows how to distinguish between the shadow and the substance! A gentleman of your good sense and character must know, however, that the reward is always proportioned to the nominal dignity. If I were acting for myself, in this business, the case would be materially changed, but, as an agent, it is a duty to consult the interest of my principal."

"The reward is of no account," said Wilder, with an eagerness that might have overreached itself, had not the individual with whom he was bargaining fastened his thoughts on the means of cheapening the other's services, with a steadiness from which they rarely swerved, when bent on so commendable an object as saving: "I seek for service."

"Then service you shall have; nor will you find us niggardly in the operation. You cannot expect an advance, for a run of no more than a month; nor any perquisites in the way of stowage, since the ship is now full to her hatches; nor, indeed, any great price in the shape of wages, since we take you chiefly to accommodate so worthy a youth, and to honour the recommendations of so respectable a house as Spriggs, Boggs and Tweed; but you will find us liberal, excessive liberal. Stay—how know we that you are the person named in the invoice—I should say, recommendation?"

"Does not the fact of possessing the letters establish my character?"

"It might in peaceable times; when the realm



was not scourged by war. A description of the person should have accompanied the documents, like a letter of advice with the bill. As we take you at some risk in this matter, you are not to be surprised that the price will be affected by the circumstance. We are liberal; I believe no house in the colonies pays more liberally; but then we have a character for prudence to lose."

"I have already said, sir, that the price shall not interrupt our bargain."

"Good: There is pleasure in transacting business on such liberal and honourable views! And yet I wish a notarial seal, or a description of the person, had accompanied the letters. This is the signature of Robert Tweed; I know it well, and would be glad to see it at the bottom of a promissory note for ten thousand pounds; that is, with a responsible endorser; but the uncertainty is much against your pecuniary interest, young man, since we become, as it were, underwriters that you are the individual named."

"In order that your mind may be at ease on this subject, Mr Bale," said a voice from among the little circle that was listening, with characteristic interest, to the progress of the bargain, "I can testify, or, should it be necessary, qualify to the person of the gentleman."

Wilder turned in some haste, and in no little astonishment, to discover the acquaintance whom chance had thrown in so extraordinary, and possibly in so disagreeable a manner, across his path; and that, too, in a portion of the country where he wished to believe himself an entire stranger. To his utter amazement, he found that the new speaker was no other than the landlord of the "Foul Anchor."—Honest Joe stood with a perfectly composed look, and with a face that might readily have been trusted to confront a far more imposing tribunal, awaiting



the result of his testimony on the seemingly wavering mind of the consignee.

"Ah! you have lodged the gentleman for a time, and you can testify that he is a punctual paymaster and a civil inmate. But I want documents fit to be filed with the correspondence of the owners *at home*."

"I know not what sort of testimony you think fit for such good company," returned the unmoved publican, holding up his hand with an air of admirable innocence; "but, if the sworn declaration of a housekeeper is of the sort you need, you are a magistrate, and may begin to say over the words at once."

"Not I, not I, man. Though a magistrate, the oath is informal, and would not be binding in law. But what do you know of the person in question?"

"That he is as good a seaman, for his years, as any in the colonies. There may be some of more practice and greater experience; I dare say such are to be found; but as to activity, watchfulness, and prudence, it would be hard to find his equal—especially for prudence."

"You then are quite certain that this person is the individual named in these papers?"

Joram received the certificates with the same admirable coolness he had maintained from the commencement, and prepared to read them with the most scrupulous care. In order to effect this necessary operation, he had to put on his spectacles, (for the landlord of the "Foul Anchor" was in the wane of life), and Wilder fancied that he stood, during the process, a notable example of how respectable depravity may become, in appearance, when supported by a reverend air.

"This is all very true, Mr Bale," continued the publican, removing his glasses, and returning the papers. "They have forgotten to say any thing of the



manner in which he saved the 'Lively Nancy,' off Hatteras, and how he run the 'Peggy and Dolly' over the Savannah bar, without a pilot, blowing great guns from the northward and eastward at the time; but I, who followed the water, as you know, in my younger days, have often heard both circumstances mentioned among sea-faring men, and I am a judge of the difficulty. I have an interest in this ship, neighbour Bale, (for though a rich man, and I a poor one, we are nevertheless neighbours)—I say I have an interest in this ship; since she is a vessel that seldom quits Newport without leaving something to jingle in my pocket, or I should not be here to-day, to see her lift her anchor."

As the publican concluded, he gave audible evidence that his visit had not gone unrewarded, by raising a music that was no less agreeable to the ears of the thrifty merchant than to his own. The two worthies laughed in an understanding way, and like two men who had found a particular profit in their intercourse with the "Royal Caroline." The latter then beckoned Wilder apart, and, after a little further preliminary discourse, the terms of the young mariner's engagement were finally settled. The true Master of the ship was to remain on board, both as a security for the insurance, and in order to preserve her reputation; but it was frankly admitted that his hurt, which was no less than a broken leg, and which the surgeons were then setting, would probably keep him below for a month to come. During the time he was kept from his duty, his functions were to be filled, in effect, by our adventurer. These arrangements occupied another hour of time, and then the consignee left the vessel, perfectly satisfied with the prudent and frugal manner in which he had discharged his duty towards his principal. Before stepping into the boat, however, with a view to be equally careful of his own interests, he took



an opportunity to request the publican to make a proper and legal affidavit of all that he knew, "of his own knowledge," concerning the officer just engaged. Honest Joram was liberal of his promises; but, as he saw no motive, now that all was so happily effected, for incurring useless risks, he contrived to evade their fulfilment, finding, no doubt, his apology for this breach of faith in the absolute poverty of his information, when the subject came to be duly considered, and construed literally by the terms required.

It is unnecessary to relate the bustle, the reparation of half-forgotten, and consequently neglected business, the duns, good wishes, injunctions to execute commissions in some distant port, and all the confused, and seemingly interminable, duties that crowd themselves into the last ten minutes that precede the sailing of a merchant vessel, more especially if she is fortunate, or rather unfortunate enough to have passengers. A certain class of men quit a vessel, in such a situation, with the reluctance that they would part with any other well established means of profit, creeping down her sides as lazily as the leech, filled to repletion, rolls from his bloody repast. The common seaman, with an attention divided by the orders of the pilot and the adieus of acquaintances, runs in every direction but the right one, and, perhaps at the only time in his life, seems ignorant of the uses of the ropes he has so long been accustomed to handle. Notwithstanding all these vexatious delays, and customary incumbrances, the "Royal Caroline" finally got rid of all her visitors but one, and Wilder was enabled to indulge in a pleasure that a seaman alone can appreciate—that of clear decks and an orderly ship's company.



## CHAPTER XII.

——“Good: Speak to the mariners: Fall to’t yarely, or we run ourselves aground.”—*Tempest*.

A GOOD deal of the day had been wasted during the time occupied by the scenes just related. The breeze had come in steady, but far from fresh. So soon, however, as Wilder found himself left without the molestation of idlers from the shore, and the busy interposition of the consignee, he cast his eyes about him, with the intention of immediately submitting the ship to its power. Sending for the pilot, he communicated his determination, and withdrew himself to a part of the deck whence he might take a proper survey of the materials of his new command, and where he might reflect on the unexpected and extraordinary situation in which he found himself.

The “Royal Caroline” was not entirely without pretensions to the lofty name she bore. She was a vessel of that happy size in which comfort and convenience had been equally consulted. The letter of the Rover affirmed she had a reputation for her speed; and her young and intelligent Commander saw, with great inward satisfaction, that she was not destitute of the means of enabling him to exhibit all her finest properties. A healthy, active, and skilful crew, justly proportioned spars, little top-hamper, and an excellent trim, with a superabundance of light sails, offered all the advantages his experience could suggest. His eye lighted, as it glanced rapidly over these several particulars of his command, and his lips moved like those of a man who uttered an inward self-gratulation, or who indulged in some vaunt, that propriety suggested should go no farther than his own thoughts.

By this time, the crew, under the orders of the



pilot, were assembled at the windlass, and had commenced heaving-in upon the cable. The labour was of a nature to exhibit their individual powers, as well as their collective force, to the greatest advantage. Their motion was simultaneous, quick, and full of muscle. The cry was clear and cheerful. As if to feel his influence, our adventurer lifted his own voice, amid the song of the mariners, in one of those sudden and inspiring calls with which a sea officer is wont to encourage his people. His utterance was deep, animated, and full of authority. The seamen started like mettled coursers when they first hear the signal, each man casting a glance behind him, as though he would scan the qualities of his new superior. Wilder smiled, like one satisfied with his success; and, turning to pace the quarter-deck, he found himself once more confronted by the calm, considerate, but certainly astonished eye of Mrs Wyllys.

"After the opinions you were pleased to express of this vessel," said the lady, in a manner of the coldest irony, "I did not expect to find you filling a place of such responsibility here."

"You probably knew, Madam," returned the young mariner, "that a sad accident had happened to her Master?"

"I did; and I had heard that another officer had been found, temporarily, to supply his place. Still, I should presume, that, on reflection, you will not think it remarkable I am amazed in finding who this person is."

"Perhaps, Madam, you may have conceived, from our conversations, an unfavourable opinion of my professional skill. But I hope that on this head you will place your mind at ease; for"——

"You are doubtless a master of the art! it would seem, at least, that no trifling danger can deter you from seeking proper opportunities to display this knowledge. Are we to have the pleasure of your



company during the whole passage, or do you leave us at the mouth of the port?"

"I am engaged to conduct the ship to the end of her voyage."

"We may then hope that the danger you either saw or imagined is lessened in your judgment, otherwise you would not be so ready to encounter it in our company."

"You do me injustice, Madam," returned Wilder, with warmth, glancing his eye unconsciously towards the grave, but deeply attentive Gertrude, as he spoke; "there is no danger that I would not cheerfully encounter, to save you, or this young lady, from harm."

"Even this young lady must be sensible of your chivalry!" Then, losing the constrained manner with which, until now, she had maintained the discourse, in one more natural, and one far more in consonance with her usually mild and thoughtful mien, Mrs Wyllys continued, "You have a powerful advocate, young man, in the unaccountable interest which I feel in your truth; an interest that my reason would fain condemn. As the ship must need your services, I will no longer detain you. Opportunities cannot be wanting to enable us to judge both of your inclination and ability to serve us. Gertrude, my love, females are usually considered as incumbrances in a vessel; more particularly when there is any delicate duty to perform, like this before us."

Gertrude started, blushed, and proceeded, after her governess, to the opposite side of the quarter-deck, followed by an expressive look from our adventurer, which seemed to say, he considered her presence any thing else but an incumbrance. As the ladies immediately took a position apart from every body, and one where they were least in the way of working the ship, at the same time that they could command an entire view of all her manœuvres,



the disappointed sailor was obliged to cut short a communication which he would gladly have continued until compelled to take the charge of the vessel from the hands of the pilot. By this time, however, the anchor was a-weigh, and the seamen were already actively engaged in the process of making sail. Wilder lent himself, with feverish excitement, to the duty; and, taking the words from the officer who was issuing the necessary orders, he assumed the immediate superintendence in person.

As sheet after sheet of canvas fell from the yards, and was distended by the complicated mechanism, the interest that a seaman ever takes in his vessel began to gain the ascendancy over all other feelings. By the time every thing was set, from the royals down, and the ship was cast with her head towards the harbour's mouth, our adventurer had probably forgotten (for the moment only, it is true) that he was a stranger among those he was in so extraordinary a manner selected to command, and how precious a stake was intrusted to his firmness and decision. After every thing was set to advantage, aloft and aloft, and the ship was brought close upon the wind, his eye scanned every yard and sail, from the truck to the hull, and concluded by casting a glance along the outer side of the vessel, in order to see that not even the smallest rope was in the water to impede her progress. A small skiff, occupied by a boy, was towing under the lee, and, as the mass of the vessel began to move, it was skipping along the surface of the water, light and buoyant as a feather. Perceiving that it was a boat belonging to the shore, Wilder walked forward, and demanded its owner. A mate pointed to Joram, who at that moment ascended from the interior of the vessel, where he had been settling the balance due from a delinquent, or, what was in his eyes the same thing, a departing debtor.

The sight of this man recalled Wilder to a recol-



lection of all that had occurred that morning, and of the whole delicacy of the task he had undertaken to perform. But the publican, whose ideas appeared always concentrated when occupied on the subject of gain, seemed troubled by no particular emotions at the interview. He approached the young mariner, and, saluting him by the title of "Captain," bade him a good voyage, with those customary wishes which seamen express, when about to separate on such an occasion.

"A lucky trip you have made of it, Captain Wilder," he concluded, "and I hope your passage will be short. You'll not be without a breeze this afternoon; and, by stretching well over towards Montauk, you'll be able to make such an offing, on the other tack, as to run the coast down in the morning. If I am any judge of the weather, the wind will have more easting in it, than you may happen to find to your fancy."

"And how long do you think my voyage is likely to last?" demanded Wilder, dropping his voice so low as to reach no ears but those of the publican.

Joram cast a furtive glance aside; and, perceiving that they were alone, he suffered an expression of hardened cunning to take possession of a countenance that ordinarily seemed set in dull, physical contentment, as he replied, laying a finger on his nose while speaking,—

"Didn't I tender the consignee a beautiful oath, master Wilder?"

"You certainly exceeded my expectations with your promptitude, and"——

"Information!" added the landlord of the 'Foul Anchor,' perceiving the other a little at a loss for a word; "yes, I have always been remarkable for the activity of my mind in these small matters; but, when a man once knows a thing thoroughly, it is a great folly to spend his breath in too many words."



"It is certainly a great advantage to be so well instructed. I suppose you improve your knowledge to a good account."

"Ah! bless me, master Wilder, what would become of us all, in these difficult times, if we did not turn an honest penny in every way that offers? I have brought up several fine children in credit, and it sha'n't be my fault if I don't leave them something too, besides my good name. Well, well; they say, 'A nimble sixpence is as good as a lazy shilling;' but give me the man who don't stand shilly-shally when a friend has need of his good word, or a lift from his hand. You always know where to find such a man; as our politicians say, after they have gone through thick and thin in the cause, be it right or be it wrong."

"Very commendable principles! and such as will surely be the means of exalting you in the world sooner or later! But you forget to answer my question: Will the passage be long, or short?"

"Heaven bless you, master Wilder! Is it for a poor publican, like me, to tell the Master of this noble ship which way the wind will blow next? There is the worthy and notable Commander Nichols, lying in his state-room below, he could do any thing with the vessel; and why am I to expect that a gentleman so well recommended as yourself will do less? I expect to hear that you have made a famous run, and have done credit to the good word I have had occasion to say in your favour."

Wilder execrated, in his heart, the wary cunning of the rogue with whom he was compelled, for the moment, to be in league; for he saw plainly that a determination not to commit himself a tittle further than he might conceive to be absolutely necessary, was likely to render Joram too circumspect, to answer his own immediate wishes. After hesitating a moment, in order to reflect, he continued hastily,—



"You see that the ship is gathering way too fast to admit of trifling. You know of the letter I received this morning?"

"Bless me, Captain Wilder! Do you take me for a postmaster? How should I know what letters arrive at Newport, and what stop on the main?"

"As timid a villain as he is thorough!" muttered the young mariner. "But this much you may surely say, Am I to be followed immediately? or is it expected that I should detain the ship in the offing, under any pretence that I can devise?"

"Heaven keep you, young gentleman! These are strange questions, to come from one who is fresh off the sea, to a man that has done no more than look at it from the land, these five-and-twenty years. According to my memory, sir, you will keep the ship about south until you are clear of the islands; and then you must make your calculations according to the wind, in order not to get into the Gulf, where, you know, the stream will be setting you one way, while your orders say, 'Go another.'"

"Luff! mind your luff, sir!" cried the pilot, in a stern voice, to the man at the helm; "luff you can; on no account go to leeward of the slaver!"

Both Wilder and the publican started, as if they found something alarming in the name of the vessel just alluded to; and the former pointed to the skiff, as he said,—

"Unless you wish to go to sea with us, Mr Joram, it is time your boat held its master."

"Ay, ay, I see you are fairly under way, and I must leave you, however much I like your company," returned the landlord of the 'Foul Anchor,' bustling over the side, and getting into his skiff in the best manner he could. "Well, boys, a good time to ye; a plenty of wind, and of the right sort; a safe passage out, and a quick return. Cast off."

His order was obeyed; the light skiff, no longer



impelled by the ship, immediately deviated from its course; and, after making a little circuit, it became stationary, while the mass of the vessel passed on, with the steadiness of an elephant from whose back a butterfly had just taken its flight. Wilder followed the boat with his eyes, for a moment; but his thoughts were recalled by the voice of the pilot, who again called, from the forward part of the ship,—

“Let the light sails lift a little, boy; let her lift; keep every inch you can, or you’ll not weather the slaver. Luff, I say, sir; luff.”

“The slaver!” muttered our adventurer, hastening to a part of the ship whence he could command a view of that important, and to him doubly interesting ship; “ay, the slaver! it may be difficult, indeed, to weather upon the slaver!”

He had unconsciously placed himself near Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude; the latter of whom was leaning on the rail of the quarter-deck, regarding the strange vessel at anchor, with a pleasure far from unnatural to her years and sex.

“You may laugh at me, and call me fickle, and perhaps credulous, dear Mrs Wyllys,” the unsuspecting girl cried, just as Wilder had taken the foregoing position, “but I wish we were well out of this ‘Royal Caroline,’ and that our passage was to be made in yonder beautiful ship!”

“It is indeed a beautiful ship!” returned Wyllys; “but I know not that it would be safer, or more comfortable, than the one we are in.”

“With what symmetry and order the ropes are arranged! and how like a bird it floats upon the water!”

“Had you particularized the duck, the comparison would have been exactly nautical,” said the governess, smiling mournfully; “you show capabilities, my love, to be one day a seaman’s wife.”



Gertrude blushed a little; and, turning back her head to answer in the playful vein of her governess, her eye met the riveted look of Wilder, fastened on herself. The colour on her cheek deepened to a carnation, and she was mute; the large gipsy hat she wore serving to conceal both her face and the confusion which so deeply suffused it.

"You make no answer, child, as if you reflected seriously on the chances," continued Mrs Wyllys, whose thoughtful and abstracted mien, however, sufficiently proved she scarcely knew what she uttered.

"The sea is too unstable an element for my taste," Gertrude coldly answered. "Pray tell me, Mrs Wyllys, is the vessel we are approaching a King's ship? She has a warlike, not to say a threatening exterior."

"The pilot has twice called her a slaver."

"A slaver! How deceitful then is all her beauty and symmetry! I will never trust to appearances again, since so lovely an object can be devoted to so vile a purpose."

"Deceitful indeed!" exclaimed Wilder aloud, under an impulse that he found as irresistible as it was involuntary. "I will take upon myself to say, that a more treacherous vessel does not float the ocean than yonder finely proportioned and admirably equipped"——

"Slaver," added Mrs Wyllys, who had time to turn, and to look all her astonishment, before the young man appeared disposed to finish his own sentence.

"Slaver;" he said with emphasis, bowing at the same time, as if he would thank her for the word.

After this interruption, a profound silence occurred. Mrs Wyllys studied the disturbed features of the young man, for a moment, with a countenance that denoted a singular, though a complicated, inter-



est; and then she gravely bent her eyes on the water, deeply occupied with intense, if not painful reflection. The light symmetrical form of Gertrude continued leaning on the rail, it is true, but Wilder was unable to catch another glimpse of her averted and shadowed lineaments. In the mean while, events, that were of a character to withdraw his attention entirely from even so pleasing a study, were hastening to their accomplishment.

The ship had, by this time, passed between the little island and the point whence Homespun had embarked, and might now be said to have fairly left the inner harbour. The slaver lay directly in her track, and every man in the vessel was gazing with deep interest, in order to see whether they might yet hope to pass on her weather-beam. The measure was desirable; because a seaman has a pride in keeping on the honourable side of every thing he encounters, but chiefly because, from the position of the stranger, it would be the means of preventing the necessity of tacking before the "Caroline" should reach a point more advantageous for such a manœuvre. The reader will, however, readily understand that the interest of her new Commander took its rise in far different feelings from those of professional pride, or momentary convenience.

Wilder felt, in every nerve, the probability that a crisis was at hand. It will be remembered that he was profoundly ignorant of the immediate intentions of the Rover. As the fort was not in a state for present service, it would not be difficult for the latter to seize upon his prey in open view of the townsmen, and bear it off, in contempt of their feeble means of defence. The position of the two ships was favourable to such an enterprise. Unprepared, and unsuspecting, the "Caroline," at no time a match for her powerful adversary, must fall an easy victim; nor would there be much reason to appre-



hend that a single shot from the battery could reach them, before the captor, and his prize, would be at such a distance as to render the blow next to impotent, if not utterly innocuous. The wild and audacious character of such an enterprise was in full accordance with the reputation of the desperate freebooter, on whose caprice, alone, the act now seemed solely to depend.

Under these impressions, and with the prospect of such a speedy termination to his new-born authority, it is not to be considered wonderful that our adventurer awaited the result with an interest far exceeding that of any of those by whom he was surrounded. He walked into the waist of the ship, and endeavoured to read the plan of his secret confederates, by some of those indications that are familiar to a seaman. Not the smallest sign of any intention to depart, or in any manner to change her position, was, however, discoverable in the pretended slaver. She lay in the same deep, beautiful, but treacherous quiet, as that in which she had reposed throughout the whole of the eventful morning. But a solitary individual could be seen amid the mazes of her rigging, or along the wide reach of all her spars. It was a seaman seated on the extremity of a lower yard, where he appeared to busy himself with one of those repairs that are so constantly required in the gear of a large ship. As the man was placed on the weather side of his own vessel, Wilder instantly conceived the idea that he was thus stationed to cast a grapnel into the rigging of the "Caroline," should such a measure become necessary, in order to bring the two ships foul of each other. With a view to prevent so rude an encounter, he instantly determined to defeat the plan. Calling to the pilot, he told him the attempt to pass to windward was of very doubtful success, and reminded him that the safer way would be to go to leeward.



"No fear, no fear, Captain," returned the stubborn conductor of the ship, who, as his authority was so brief, was only the more jealous of its unrestrained exercise, and who, like an usurper of the throne, felt a jealousy of the more legitimate power which he had temporarily dispossessed; "no fear of me, Captain. I have trolled over this ground often er than you have crossed the ocean, and I know the name of every rock on the bottom, as well as the town-crier knows the streets of Newport. Let her luff, boy; luff her into the very eye of the wind; luff, you can"——

"You have the ship shivering as it is, sir," said Wilder, sternly: "Should you get us foul of the slaver, who is to pay the cost?"

"I am a general underwriter," returned the opinionated pilot; "my wife shall mend every hole I make in your sails, with a needle no bigger than a hair, and with such a palm as a fairy's thimble!"

"This is fine talking, sir, but you are already losing the ship's way; and, before you have ended your boasts, she will be as fast in irons as a condemned thief. Keep the sails full, boy; keep them a rap full, sir."

"Ay, ay, keep her a good full," echoed the pilot, who, as the difficulty of passing to windward became at each instant more obvious, evidently began to waver in his resolution. "Keep her full-and-by,——I have always told you full-and-by,——I don't know, Captain, seeing that the wind has hauled a little, but we shall have to pass to leeward yet; but you will acknowledge, that, in such case, we shall be obliged to go about."

Now, in point of fact, the wind, though a little lighter than it had been, was, if any thing, a trifle more favourable; nor had Wilder ever, in any manner, denied that the ship would not have to tack, some twenty minutes sooner, by going to leeward of the



other vessel, than if she had succeeded in her delicate experiment of passing on the more honourable side; but, as the vulgarest minds are always the most reluctant to confess their blunders, the discomfited pilot was disposed to qualify the concession he found himself compelled to make, by some salvo of the sort, that he might not lessen his reputation for foresight, among his auditors.

“Keep her away at once,” cried Wilder, who was beginning to change the tones of remonstrance for those of command; “keep the ship away, sir, while you have room to do it, or, by the”——

His lips became motionless; for his eye happened to fall on the pale, speaking, and anxious countenance of Gertrude.

“I believe it must be done, seeing that the wind is hauling. Hard up, boy, and run her under the stern of the ship at anchor. Hold! keep your luff again; eat into the wind to the bone, boy; lift again; let the light sails lift. The slaver has run a warp directly across our track. If there’s law in the Plantations, I’ll have her Captain before the Courts for this!”

“What means the fellow?” demanded Wilder, jumping hastily on a gun, in order to get a better view.

His mate pointed to the lee-quarter of the other vessel, where, sure enough, a large rope was seen whipping the water, as though in the very process of being extended. The truth instantly flashed on the mind of our young mariner. The Rover lay secretly moored with a spring, with a view to bring his guns more readily to bear upon the battery, should his defence become necessary, and he now profited, by the circumstance, in order to prevent the trader from passing to leeward. The whole arrangement excited a good deal of surprise, and not a few execrations among the officers of the “Caroline;” though



none but her Commander had the smallest twinkling of the real reason why the kedge had thus been laid, and why a warp was so awkwardly stretched across their path. Of the whole number, the pilot alone saw cause to rejoice in the circumstance. He had, in fact, got the ship in such a situation, as to render it nearly as difficult to proceed in one way as in the other; and he was now furnished with a sufficient justification, should any accident occur, in the course of the exceedingly critical manœuvre, from whose execution there was now no retreat.

"This is an extraordinary liberty to take in the mouth of a harbour," muttered Wilder, when his eyes put him in possession of the fact just related. "You must shove her by to windward, pilot; there is no remedy."

"I wash my hands of the consequences, as I call all on board to witness," returned the other, with the air of a deeply offended man, though secretly glad of the appearance of being driven to the very measure he was a minute before so obstinately bent on executing. "Law must be called in here, if sticks are snapped, or rigging parted. Luff to a hair, boy; luff her short into the wind, and try a half-board."

The man at the helm obeyed the order. Releasing his hold of its spokes, the wheel made a quick evolution; and the ship, feeling a fresh impulse of the wind, turned her head heavily towards the quarter whence it came, the canvas fluttering with a noise like that produced by a flock of water-fowl just taking wing. But, met by the helm again, she soon fell off as before, powerless from having lost her way, and settling bodily down toward the fancied slaver, impelled by the air, which seemed, however, to have lost much of its force, at the critical instant it was most needed.

The situation of the "Caroline" was one which



a seaman will readily understand. She had forged so far ahead as to lie directly on the weather-beam of the stranger, but too near to enable her to fall-off in the least, without imminent danger that the vessels would come foul. The wind was inconstant, sometimes blowing in puffs, while at moments there was a perfect lull. As the ship felt the former, her tall masts bent gracefully towards the slaver, as if to make the parting salute; but, relieved from the momentary pressure of the inconstant air, she as often rolled heavily to windward, without advancing a foot. The effect of each change, however, was to bring her still nigher to her dangerous neighbour, until it became evident, to the judgment of the youngest seaman in the vessel, that nothing but a sudden shift of wind could enable her to pass ahead, the more especially as the tide was on the change.

As the inferior officers of the "Caroline" were not delicate in their commentaries on the dulness which had brought them into so awkward and so mortifying a position, the pilot endeavoured to conceal his own vexation, by the number and vociferousness of his orders. From blustering, he soon passed into confusion, until the men themselves stood idle, not knowing which of the uncertain and contradictory mandates they received ought to be first obeyed. In the mean time, Wilder had folded his arms with an appearance of entire composure, and taken his station near his female passengers. Mrs Wylls closely studied his eye, with the wish of ascertaining, by its expression, the nature and extent of their danger, if danger there might be, in the approaching collision of two ships in water that was perfectly smooth, and where one was stationary, and the motion of the other scarcely perceptible. The stern, determined look she saw settling about the brow of the young man excited an uneasiness that she would not otherwise have felt, perhaps, un-



der circumstances that, in themselves, bore no very vivid appearance of hazard.

"Have we aught to apprehend, sir?" demanded the governess, endeavouring to conceal from her charge the nature of her own disquietude.

"I told you, Madam, the 'Caroline' would prove an unlucky ship."

Both females regarded the peculiarly bitter smile with which Wilder made this reply as an evil omen, and Gertrude clung to her companion as to one on whom she had long been accustomed to lean.

"Why do not the mariners of the slaver appear, to assist us—to keep us from coming too nigh?" anxiously exclaimed the latter.

"Why do they not, indeed! but we shall see them, I think, ere long."

"You speak and look, young man, as if you thought there would be danger in the interview!"

"Keep near to me," returned Wilder, in tones that were nearly smothered by the manner in which he compressed his lips. "In every event, keep as nigh my person as possible."

"Haul the spanker-boom to windward," shouted the pilot; "lower away the boats, and tow the ship's head round—clear away the stream anchor—ast gib-sheet—board main tack, again."

The astonished men stood like statues, not knowing whither to turn, some calling to the rest to do this or that, and some as loudly countermanding the order; when an authoritative voice was heard calmly to say,—

"Silence in the ship."

The tones were of that sort which, while they denote the self-possession of the speaker, never fail to inspire the inferior with a portion of the confidence of him who commands. Every face was turned towards the quarter of the vessel whence the sound proceeded, as if each ear was ready to catch



the smallest additional mandate. Wilder was standing on the head of the capstan, where he could command a full view on every side of him. With a quick and understanding glance, he had made himself a perfect master of the situation of his ship. His eye was at the instant fixed anxiously on the slaver, as if it would pierce the treacherous calm which still reigned on all about her, in order to know how far his exertions might be permitted to be useful. But it appeared as if the stranger lay like some enchanted vessel on the water, not a human form even appearing about all her complicated machinery, except the seaman already named, who still continued his employment, as though the "Caroline" was not within a hundred miles of the place where he sat. The lips of Wilder moved: it might be in bitterness; it might be in satisfaction; for, a smile of the most equivocal nature lighted his features, as he continued, in the same deep, commanding voice as before,—

"Throw all aback—lay every thing flat to the masts, forward and aft."

"Ay!" echoed the pilot, "lay every thing flat to the masts."

"Is there a shove-boat alongside the ship?" demanded our adventurer.

The answer, from a dozen voices, was in the affirmative.

"Show that pilot into her."

"This is an unlawful order," exclaimed the other; "and I forbid any voice but mine to be obeyed."

"*Throw him in,*" sternly repeated Wilder.

Amid the bustle and exertion of bracing round the yards, the resistance of the pilot produced little or no sensation. He was soon raised on the extended arms of the two mates; and, after exhibiting his limbs in sundry contortions in the air, he was dropped into the boat, with as little ceremony as though he had been a billet of wood. The end of the



painter was cast after him ; and then the discomfited guide was left, with singular indifference, to his own meditations.

In the mean time, the order of Wilder had been executed. Those vast sheets of canvas which, a moment before, had been either fluttering in the air, or were bellying inward or outward, as they touched or filled, as it is technically called, were now all pressing against their respective masts, impelling the vessel to retrace her mistaken path. The manœuvre required the utmost attention, and the nicest delicacy in its direction. But her young Commander proved himself, in every particular, competent to his task. Here, a sail was lifted ; there, another was brought with a flatter surface to the air ; now, the lighter canvas was spread ; and now it disappeared, like thin vapour suddenly dispelled by the sun. The voice of Wilder, throughout, though calm, was breathing with authority. The ship itself seemed, like an animated being, conscious that her destinies were reposed in different, and more intelligent, hands than before. Obedient to the new impulse they had received, the immense cloud of canvas, with all its tall forest of spars and rigging, rolled to and fro ; and then, having overcome the state of comparative rest in which it had been lying, the vessel heavily yielded to the pressure, and began to recede.

Throughout the whole of the time necessary to extricate the "Caroline," the attention of Wilder was divided between his own ship and his inexplicable neighbour. Not a sound was heard to issue from the imposing and death-like stillness of the latter. Not a single anxious countenance, not even one lurking eye, was to be detected, at any of the numerous outlets by which the inmates of an armed vessel can look abroad upon the deep. The seaman on the yard continued his labour, like a man unconscious of any thing but his own existence. There was



however, a slow, though nearly imperceptible, motion in the ship itself, which was apparently made, like the lazy movement of a slumbering whale, more by listless volition, than through any agency of human hands.

Not the smallest of these changes escaped the keen and understanding examination of Wilder. He saw, that, as his own ship retired, the side of the slaver was gradually exposed to the "Caroline." The muzzles of the threatening guns gaped constantly on his vessel, as the eye of the crouching tiger follows the movement of its prey; and at no time, while nearest, did there exist a single instant that the decks of the latter ship could not have been swept, by a general discharge from the battery of the former. At each successive order issued from his own lips, our adventurer turned his eye, with increasing interest, to ascertain whether he would be permitted to execute it; and never did he feel certain that he was left to the sole management of the "Caroline" until he found that she had backed from her dangerous proximity to the other; and that, obedient to a new disposition of her sails, she was falling off, before the light air, in a place where he could hold her entirely at command.

Finding that the tide was getting unfavourable, and the wind too light to stem it, the sails were then drawn to her yards in festoons, and an anchor was dropped to the bottom.



## CHAPTER XIII.

“What have here? A man, or a fish?”—*The Tempest.*

THE “Caroline” now lay within a cable’s length of the supposed slaver. In dismissing the pilot, Wilder had assumed a responsibility from which a seaman usually shrinks; since, in the case of any untoward accident in leaving the port, it would involve a loss of insurance, and his own probable punishment. How far he had been influenced, in taking so decided a step, by a knowledge of his being beyond, or above, the reach of the law, will probably be made manifest in the course of the narrative; the only immediate effect of the measure, was, to draw the whole of his attention, which had before been so much divided between his passengers and the ship, to the care of the latter. But, so soon as his vessel was secured, for a time at least, and his mind was no longer excited by the expectation of a scene of immediate violence, our adventurer found leisure to return to his former, though (to so thorough a seaman) scarcely more agreeable occupation. The success of his delicate manœuvre had imparted to his countenance a glow of something very like triumph; and his step, as he advanced towards Mrs. Wyllys and Gertrude, was that of a man who enjoyed the consciousness of having acquitted himself dexterously, in circumstances that required no small exhibition of professional skill. At least, such was the construction the former lady put upon his kindling eye and exulting air; though the latter might, possibly, be disposed to judge of his motives with greater indulgence. Perhaps both were ignorant of the secret reasons of his self-felicitation; and it is possible that a sentiment, of a far more generous nature than



either of them could imagine, had a full share of its influence in his present feelings.

Be this as it might, Wilder no sooner saw that the "Caroline" was swinging to her anchor, and that his services were of no further immediate use, than he sought an opportunity to renew a conversation which had hitherto been so vague, and so often interrupted. Mrs Wyllys had long been viewing the neighbouring vessel with a steady look; nor did she now turn her gaze from the motionless and silent object, until the young mariner was near her person. She was then the first to speak.

"Yonder vessel must possess an extraordinary, not to say an insensible, crew!" exclaimed the governess, in a tone bordering on astonishment. "If such things were, it would not be difficult to fancy her a spectre-ship."

"She is truly an admirably proportioned and a beautiful equipped trader!"

"Did my apprehensions deceive me? or were we in actual danger of getting the two vessels entangled?"

"There was certainly some reason for apprehension; but you see we are safe."

"For which we have to thank your skill. The manner in which you have just extricated us from the late danger, has a direct tendency to contradict all that you were pleased to foretel of that which is to come."

"I well know, Madam, that my conduct may bear an unfavourable construction, but"—

"You thought it no harm to laugh at the weakness of three credulous females," continued Mrs Wyllys, smiling. "Well, you have had your amusement; and now, I hope, you will be more disposed to pity what is said to be a natural infirmity of woman's mind."

As the governess concluded, she glanced her eye



at Gertrude, with an expression that seemed to say, it would be cruel, now, to trifle further with the apprehensions of one so innocent and so young. The look of Wilder followed her own; and when he answered, it was with a sincerity that was well calculated to carry conviction in its tones.

“On the faith which a gentleman owes to all your sex, Madam, what I have already told you I still continue to believe.”

“The gammonings and the top-gallant-masts!”

“No, no,” interrupted the young mariner, slightly laughing, and at the same time colouring a good deal; “perhaps not all of that. But neither mother, wife, nor sister of mine, should make this passage in the ‘Royal Caroline.’”

“Your look, your voice, and your air of good faith, make a strange contradiction to your words, young man; for, while the former almost tempt me to believe you honest, the latter have not a shade of reason to support them. Perhaps I ought to be ashamed of such a weakness, and yet I will acknowledge, that the mysterious quiet, which seems to have settled for ever on yonder ship, has excited an inexplicable uneasiness, that may in some way be connected with her character.—She is certainly a slaver?”

“She is certainly beautiful!” exclaimed Gertrude.

“Very beautiful!” Wilder gravely rejoined.

“There is a man still seated on one of her yards who appears to be entranced in his occupation,” continued Mrs Wyllys, leaning her chin thoughtfully on her hand, as she gazed at the object of which she was speaking. “Not once, during the time we were in so much danger of getting the ships entangled, did that seaman bestow so much as a stolen glance towards us. He resembles the solitary individual in the city of the transformed; for not another mortal



is there to keep him company, so far as we may discover."

"Perhaps his comrades sleep," said Gertrude.

"Sleep! Mariners do not sleep in an hour and a day like this! Tell me, Mr Wilder, (you that are a seaman should know), is it usual for the crew to sleep when a strange vessel is so nigh—near even to touching, I might almost say?"

"It is not."

"I thought as much; for I am not an entire novice in matters of your daring, your hardy, your *noble* profession!" returned the governess, with deep emphasis. "And, had we gone foul of the slaver, do you think her crew would have maintained their apathy?"

"I think not, Madam."

"There is something, in all this assumed tranquillity, which might induce one to suspect the worst of her character. Is it known that any of her crew have had communication with the town, since her arrival?"

"It is."

"I have heard that false colours have been seen on the coast, and that ships have been plundered, and their people and passengers maltreated, during the past summer. It is even thought that the famous Rover has tired of his excesses on the Spanish Main, and that a vessel was not long since seen in the Caribbean sea, which was thought to be the cruiser of that desperate pirate!"

Wilder made no reply. His eyes, which had been fastened steadily, though respectfully, on those of the speaker, fell to the deck, and he appeared to await whatever her further pleasure might choose to utter. The governess mused a moment; and then, with a change in the expression of her countenance which proved that her suspicion of the truth was too



light to continue without further and better confirmation, she added,—

“After all, the occupation of a slaver is bad enough, and unhappily by far too probable, to render it necessary to attribute any worse character to the stranger. I would I knew the motive of your singular assertions, Mr Wilder?”

“I cannot better explain them, Madam: unless my manner produces its effect, I fail altogether in my intentions, which at least are sincere.”

“Is not the risk lessened by your presence?”

“Lessened, but not removed.”

Until now, Gertrude had rather listened, as if unavoidably, than seemed to make one of the party. But here she turned quickly, and perhaps a little impatiently, to Wilder, and, while her cheeks glowed, she demanded, with a smile that might have brought even a more obdurate man to his confession,—

“Is it forbidden to be more explicit?”

The young Commander hesitated, perhaps as much to dwell upon the ingenuous features of the speaker, as to decide upon his answer. The colour mounted into his own embrowned cheek, and his eye lighted with a gleam of open pleasure; then, as though suddenly reminded that he was delaying to reply, he said,—

“I am certain, that, in relying on your discretion, I shall be safe.”

“Doubt it not,” returned Mrs Wyllys. “In no event shall you ever be betrayed.”

“Betrayed! For myself, Madam, I have little fear. If you suspect me of personal apprehension, you do me great injustice.”

“We suspect you of nothing unworthy,” said Gertrude hastily, “but—we are very anxious for ourselves.”



"Then will I relieve your uneasiness, though at the expense of"——

A call, from one of the mates to the other, arrested his words for the moment, and drew his attention to the neighbouring ship.

"The slaver's people have just found out that their ship is not made to put in a glass case, to be looked at by women and children," cried the speaker, in tones loud enough to send his words into the fore-top, where the messmate he addressed was attending to some especial duty.

"Ay, ay," was the answer; "seeing us in motion, has put him in mind of his next voyage. They keep watch aboard the fellow, like the sun in Greenland; six months on deck, and six months below!"

The witticism produced, as usual, a laugh among the seamen, who continued their remarks in a similar vein, but in tones more suited to the deference due to their superiors.

The eyes, however, of Wilder had fastened themselves on the other ship. The man so long seated on the end of the main-yard had disappeared, and another sailor was deliberately walking along the opposite quarter of the same spar, steadying himself by the boom, and holding in one hand the end of a rope, which he was apparently about to reeve in the place where it properly belonged. The first glance told Wilder that the latter was Fid, who was so far recovered from his debauch as to tread the giddy height with as much, if not greater, steadiness than he would have rolled along the ground, had his duty called him to terra firma. The countenance of the young man, which, an instant before, had been flushed with excitement, and which was beaming with the pleasure of an opening confidence, changed directly to a look of gloom and reserve. Mrs Wyllys, who had lost no shade of the varying expression



of his face, resumed the discourse, with some earnestness, where he had seen fit so abruptly to break it off.

"You would relieve us," she said, "at the expense of"—

"Life, Madam ; but not of honour."

"Gertrude, we can now retire to our cabin," observed Mrs Wyllys, with an air of cold displeasure, in which disappointment was a good deal mingled with resentment at the trifling of which she believed herself the subject. The eye of Gertrude was no less averted and distant than that of her governess, while the tint that gave lustre to its beam was brighter, if not quite so resentful. As the two moved past the silent Wilder, each dropped a distant salute, and then our adventurer found himself the sole occupant of the quarter-deck. While his crew were busied in coiling ropes, and clearing the decks, their young Commander leaned his head on the taffrail, (that part of the vessel which the good relict of the Rear-Admiral had so strangely confounded with a very different object in the other end of the ship), remaining for many minutes in an attitude of deep abstraction. From this reverie he was at length aroused, by a sound like that produced by the lifting and falling of a light oar into the water. Believing himself about to be annoyed by visitors from the land, he raised his head, and cast a dissatisfied glance over the vessel's side, to see who was approaching.

A light skiff, such as is commonly used by fishermen in the bays and shallow waters of America, was lying within ten feet of the ship, and in a position where it was necessary to take some little pains in order to observe it. It was occupied by a single man, whose back was towards the vessel, and who was apparently abroad on the ordinary business of the owner of such a boat.

"Are you in search of rudder-fish, my friend, that



you hang so closely under my counter?" demanded Wilder. "The bay is said to be full of delicious bass, and other scaly gentlemen, that would far better repay your trouble."

"He is well paid who gets the bite he baits for," returned the other, turning his head, and exhibiting the cunning eye and chuckling countenance of old Bob Bunt, as Wilder's recent and treacherous confederate had announced his name to be.

"How now! Dare you trust yourself with me, in five-fathom water, after the villanous trick you have seen fit"——

"Hist! noble Captain, hist!" interrupted Bob, holding up a finger, to repress the other's animation, and intimating, by a sign, that their conference must be held in lower tones; "there is no need to call all hands to help us through a little chat. In what way have I fallen to leeward of your favour, Captain?"

"In what way, sirrah! Did you not receive money, to give such a character of this ship to the ladies as (you said yourself) would make them sooner pass the night in a churchyard, than trust foot on board her?"

"Something of the sort passed between us, Captain; but you forgot one half of the conditions, and I overlooked the other; and I need not tell so expert a navigator, that two halves make a whole. No wonder, therefore, that the affair dropt through between us."

"How! Do you add falsehood to perfidy? What part of my engagement did I neglect?"

"What part!" returned the pretended fisherman, leisurely drawing in a line, which the quick eye of Wilder saw, though abundantly provided with lead at the end, was destitute of the equally material implement—the hook; "What part, Captain! No less a particular than the second guinea."

"It was to have been the reward of a service



done, and not an earnest, like its fellow, to induce you to undertake the duty."

"Ah! you have helped me to the very word I wanted. I fancied it was not in earnest, like the one I got, and so I left the job half finished."

"Half finished, scoundrel! you never commenced what you swore so stoutly to perform."

"Now are you on as wrong a course, my Master, as if you steered due east to get to the Pole. I religiously performed one half my undertaking; and, you will acknowledge, I was only half paid."

"You would find it difficult to prove that you even did that little."

"Let us look into the log. I enlisted to walk up the hill as far as the dwelling of the good Admiral's widow, and there to make certain alterations in my sentiments, which it is not necessary to speak of between us."

"Which you did not make; but, on the contrary, which you thwarted, by telling an exactly contradictory tale."

"True."

"True! knave?—Were justice done you, an acquaintance with a rope's end would be a merited reward."

"A squall of words!—If your ship steer as wild as your ideas, Captain, you will make a crooked passage to the south. Do you not think it an easier matter, for an old man like me, to tell a few lies than to climb yonder long and heavy hill? In strict justice, more than half my duty was done when I got into the presence of the believing widow; and then I concluded to refuse the half of the reward that was unpaid, and to take bounty from t'other side."

"Villain!" exclaimed Wilder, a little blinded by resentment, "even your years shall no longer protect you from punishment. Forward, there! send



a crew into the jolly boat, sir, and bring me this old fellow in the skiff on board the ship. Pay no attention to his outcries ; I have an account to settle with him, that cannot be balanced without a little noise."

The mate, to whom this order was addressed, and who had answered the hail, jumped on the rail, where he got sight of the craft he was commanded to chase. In less than a minute he was in the boat, with four men, and pulling round the bows of the ship, in order to get on the side necessary to effect his object. The self-styled Bob Bunt gave one or two strokes with his skulls, and sent the skiff some twenty or thirty fathoms off, where he lay, chuckling like a man who saw only the success of his cunning, without any apparent apprehensions of the consequences. But, the moment the boat appeared in view, he laid himself to the work with vigorous arms, and soon convinced the spectators that his capture was not to be achieved without abundant difficulty.

For some little time, it was doubtful what course the fugitive meant to take ; for he kept whirling and turning in swift and sudden circles, completely confusing and baffling his pursuers, by his skilful and light evolutions. But, soon tiring of this taunting amusement, or perhaps apprehensive of exhausting his own strength, which was powerfully and most dexterously exerted, it was not long before he darted off in a perfectly straight line, taking the direction of the "Rover."

The chase now grew hot and earnest, exciting the clamour and applause of most of the nautical spectators. The result, for a time, seemed doubtful ; but, if any thing, the jolly boat, though some distance astern, began to gain, as it gradually overcame the resistance of the water. In a very few minutes, however, the skiff shot under the stern of the other ship, and disappeared, bringing the hull of the vessel in a line with the "Caroline" and its course. The



pursuers were not long in taking the same direction; and then the seamen of the latter ship began, laughingly, to climb the rigging, in order to command a further view, over the intervening object.

Nothing, however, was to be seen beyond but water, and the still more distant island, with its little fort. In a few minutes, the crew of the jolly boat were observed pulling back in their path, returning slowly, like men who were disappointed. All crowded to the side of the ship, in order to hear the termination of the adventure; the noisy assemblage even drawing the two passengers from the cabin to the deck. Instead, however, of meeting the questions of their shipmates with the usual wordy narrative of men of their condition, the crew of the boat wore startled and bewildered looks. Their officer sprang to the deck without speaking, and immediately sought his Commander.

"The skiff was too light for you, Mr Nighthead," Wilder calmly observed, as the other approached, having never moved, himself, from the place where he had been standing during the whole proceeding.

"Too light, sir! Are you acquainted with the man who pulled it?"

"Not particularly well: I only know him for a knave."

"He should be one, since he is of the family of the devil!"

"I will not take on myself to say he is as bad as you appear to think, though I have little reason to believe he has any honesty to cast into the sea. What has become of him?"

"A question easily asked, but hard to answer. In the first place, though an old and a gray-headed fellow, he twitched his skiff along as if it floated in air. We were not a minute, or two at the most, behind him; but, when we got on the other side of the slaver, boat and man had vanished!"



"He doubled her bows while you were crossing the stern."

"Did you see him, then?"

"I confess we did not."

"It could not be, sir; since we pulled far enough ahead to examine on both sides at once; besides, the people of the slaver knew nothing of him."

"You saw the slaver's people?"

"I should have said her man; for there is seemingly but one hand on board her."

"And how was he employed?"

"He was seated in the chains, and seem'd to have been asleep. It is a lazy ship, sir; and one that takes more money from her owners, I fancy, than it ever returns!"

"It may be so. Well, let the rogue escape. There is the prospect of a breeze coming in from the sea, Mr Earing; we will get our top-sails to the mast-heads again, and be in readiness for it. I could like yet to see the sun set in the water."

The mates and the crew went cheerfully to their task, though many a curious question was asked, by the wondering seamen, of their shipmates who had been in the boat, and many a solemn answer was given, while they were again spreading the canvas, to invite the breeze. Wilder turned, in the mean time, to Mrs Wyllys, who had been an auditor of his short conversation with the mate.

"You perceive, Madam," he said, "that our voyage does not commence without its omens"

"When you tell me, inexplicable young man, with the air of singular sincerity you sometimes possess, that we are unwise in trusting to the ocean, I am half inclined to put faith in what you say; but when you attempt to enforce your advice with the machinery of witchcraft, you only induce me to proceed."

"Man the windlass!" cried Wilder, with a look



that seemed to tell his companions, If you are so stout of heart, the opportunity to show your resolution shall not be wanting. "Man the windlass there! We will try the breeze again, and work the ship into the offing while there is light."

The clattering of handspikes preceded the mariners' song. Then the heavy labour, by which the ponderous iron was lifted from the bottom, was again resumed, and, in a few more minutes, the ship was once more released from her hold upon the land.

The wind soon came fresh off the ocean, charged with the saline dampness of the element. As the air fell upon the distended and balanced sails, the ship bowed to the welcome guest; and then, rising gracefully from its low inclination, the breeze was heard singing, through the maze of rigging, the music that is ever grateful to a seaman's ear. The welcome sounds, and the freshness of the peculiar air, gave additional energy to the movements of the men. The anchor was stowed, the ship cast, the lighter sails set, the courses had fallen, and the bows of the "Caroline" were throwing the spray before her, ere another ten minutes had gone by.

Wilder had now undertaken himself the task of running his vessel between the islands of Connannicut and Rhode. Fortunately for the heavy responsibility he had assumed, the channel was not difficult, and the wind had veered so far to the east as to give him a favourable opportunity, after making a short stretch to windward, of laying through in a single reach. But this stretch would bring him under the necessity of passing very near the "Rover," or of losing no small portion of his 'vantage ground. He did not hesitate. When the vessel was as nigh the weather shore as his busy lead told him was prudent, the ship was tacked, and her head laid directly towards the still motionless and seemingly unob-servant slaver.



The approach of the "Caroline" was far more propitious than before. The wind was steady, and her crew held her in hand, as a skilful rider governs the action of a fiery and mettled steed. Still the passage was not made without exciting a breathless interest in every soul in the Bristol trader. Each individual had his own secret cause of curiosity. To the seamen, the strange ship began to be the subject of wonder; the governess, and her ward, scarce knew the reasons of their emotions; while Wilder was but too well instructed in the nature of the hazard that all but himself were running. As before, the man at the wheel was about to indulge his nautical pride, by going to windward; but, although the experiment would now have been attended with but little hazard, he was commanded to proceed differently.

"Pass the slaver's lee-beam, sir," said Wilder to him, with a gesture of authority; and then the young Captain went himself to lean on the weather-rail, like every other idler on board, to examine the object they were so fast approaching. As the "Caroline" came boldly up, seeming to bear the breeze before her, the sighing of the wind, as it murmured through the rigging of the stranger, was the only sound that issued from her. Not a single human face, not even a secret and curious eye, was any where to be seen. The passage was of course rapid, and, as the two vessels, for an instant, lay with heads and sterns nearly equal, Wilder thought it was to be made without the slightest notice from the imaginary slaver. But he was mistaken. A light, active form, in the undress attire of a naval officer, sprang upon the taffrail, and waved a sea-cap in salute. The instant the fair hair was blowing about the countenance of this individual, Wilder recognized the quick, keen eye and features of the Rover.



"Think you the wind will hold here, sir?" shouted the latter, at the top of his voice.

"It has come in fresh enough to be steady," was the answer.

"A wise mariner would get all his easting in time to me, there is a smack of West-Indies about it."

"You believe we shall have it more at south?"

"I do: But a taught bow-line, for the night, will carry you clear."

By this time the "Caroline" had swept by, and she was now luffing, across the slaver's bows, into her course again. The figure on the taffrail waved high the sea-cap in adieu, and disappeared.

"Is it possible that such a man can traffic in human beings!" exclaimed Gertrude, when the sounds of both voices had ceased.

Receiving no reply, she turned quickly, to regard her companion. The governess was standing like a being entranced, with her eyes looking on vacancy; for they had not changed their direction since the motion of the vessel had carried her beyond the countenance of the stranger. As Gertrude took her hand, and repeated the question, the recollection of Mrs Wylls returned. Passing her own hand over her brow, with a bewildered air, she forced a smile, as she said,—

"The meeting of vessels, or the renewal of any maritime experience, never fails to revive my earliest recollections, love. But surely that was an extraordinary being, who has at length shown himself in the slaver!"

"For a slaver, most extraordinary!"

Wylls leaned her head on her hand for an instant, and then turned to seek the person of Wilder. The young mariner was standing near, studying the expression of her countenance, with an interest scarcely less remarkable than her own air of thought.



"Tell me, young man, is yonder individual the Commander of the slaver?"

"He is."

"You know him?"

"We have met."

"And he is called"——

"The Master of yon ship. I know no other name."

"Gertrude, we will seek our cabin. When the land is leaving us, Mr Wilder will have the goodness to let us know."

The latter bowed his assent, and the ladies then left the deck. The "Caroline" had now the prospect of getting speedily to sea. In order to effect this object, Wilder had every thing, that would draw, set to the utmost advantage. One hundred times, at least, however, did he turn his head, to steal a look at the vessel he had left behind. She ever lay as when they passed—a regular, beautiful, but motionless object, in the bay. From each of these furtive examinations, our adventurer invariably cast an excited and impatient glance at the sails of his own ship; ordering this to be drawn tighter to the spar beneath, or that to be more distended along its mast.

The effect of so much solicitude, united with so much skill, was to urge the Bristol trader through her element at a rate she had rarely, if ever, surpassed. It was not long before the land ceased to be seen on her two beams, and then it was only to be traced in the blue islands in their rear, or in a long, dim horizon, to the north and west, where the limits of the vast Continent stretches for countless leagues. The passengers were now summoned to take their parting look at the land, and the officers were seen noting their departures. Just before the day shut in, and ere the islands were entirely sunk into the waves, Wilder ascended to an upper yard,



bearing in his hand a glass. His gaze, towards the haven he had left, was long, anxious, and abstracted. But his descent was distinguished by a more quiet eye, and a calmer mien. A smile, like that of success, played about his lips; and he gave his orders clearly, in a cheerful, encouraging voice. They were obeyed as briskly. The elder mariners pointed to the seas, as they cut through them, and affirmed that never had the "Caroline" made such progress. The mates cast the log, and nodded their approbation, as one announced to the other the unwonted speed of the ship. In short, content and hilarity reigned on board; for it was deemed that their passage was commenced under such auspices as would lead it to a speedy and a prosperous termination. In the midst of these encouraging omens, the sun dipped into the sea, illuming, as it fell, a wide reach of the chill and gloomy element. Then the shades of the hour began to gather over the vast surface of the illimitable waste.



## CHAPTER XIV.

"So foul and fair a day I have not seen."—*Macbeth*.

THE first watch of the night was marked by no change. Wilder had joined his passengers, cheerful, and with that air of enjoyment which every officer of the sea is more or less wont to exhibit, when he has disengaged his vessel from the dangers of the land, and has fairly launched her on the trackless and fathomless abyss of the ocean. He no longer alluded to the hazards of the passage, but strove, by the thousand nameless assiduities which his station enabled him to manifest, to expel all recollection of what had passed from their minds. Mrs Wyllys lent



herself to his evident efforts to remove their apprehensions ; and one, ignorant of what had occurred between them, would have thought the little party, around the evening's repast, was a contented and unsuspecting group of travellers, who had commenced their enterprise under the happiest auguries.

Still there was that, in the thoughtful eye and clouded brow of the governess, as at times she turned her bewildered look on our adventurer, which denoted a mind far from being at ease. She listened to the gay and peculiar, because professional, sallies of the young mariner, with smiles that were indulgent, while they were melancholy, as though his youthful spirits, exhibited as they were by touches of a humour that was thoroughly and quaintly nautical, recalled familiar, but sad, images to her fancy. Gertrude had less alloy in her pleasure. Home, with a beloved and indulgent father, were before her ; and she felt, while the ship yielded to each fresh impulse of the wind, as if another of those weary miles, which had so long separated them, was already conquered.

During these short but pleasant hours, the adventurer, who had been so oddly called into the command of the Bristol trader, appeared in a new character. Though his conversation was characterized by the frank manliness of a seaman, it was, nevertheless, tempered by the delicacy of perfect breeding. The beautiful mouth of Gertrude often struggled to conceal the smiles which played around her lips and dimpled her cheeks, like a soft air ruffling the surface of some limpid spring ; and once or twice, when the humour of Wilder came unexpectedly across her youthful fancy, she was compelled to yield to the impulses of an irresistible merriment.

One hour of the free intercourse of a ship can do more towards softening the cold exterior in which the world encrusts the best of human feelings, than



weeks of the unmeaning ceremonies of the land. He who has not felt this truth, would do well to distrust his own companionable qualities. It would seem that man, when he finds himself in the solitude of the ocean, feels the deepest how great is his dependancy on others for happiness. Then it is that he yields to sentiments with which he trifled, in the wantonness of abundance, and is glad to seek relief in the sympathies of his kind. A community of hazard makes a community of interest, whether person or property composes the stake. Perhaps a metaphysical, and a too literal, reasoner might add, that, as in such situations each one is conscious the condition and fortunes of his neighbour are the mere indexes of his own, they acquire value in his eyes from their affinity to himself. If this conclusion be true, Providence has happily so constituted the best of the species, that the sordid feeling is too latent to be discovered; and least of all was any one of the three, who passed the first hours of the night around the cabin table of the "Royal Caroline," to be included in so selfish a class. The nature of the intercourse, which had rendered the first hours of their acquaintance so singularly equivocal, appeared to be forgotten in the freedom of the moment; or, if it were remembered at all, it merely served to give the young seaman additional interest in the eyes of the females, as much by the mystery of the circumstances as by the evident concern he had manifested in their behalf.

The bell had struck eight; and the hoarse long-drawn call, which summoned the sleepers to the deck, was heard, before either of the party seemed aware of the lateness of the hour.

"It is the middle watch," said Wilder, smiling as he observed that Gertrude started at the strange sounds, and sat listening, like a timid doe that catches the note of the hunter's horn. "We seamen are



not always musical, as you may judge by the strains of the spokesman on this occasion. There are, however, ears in the ship to whom his notes are even more discordant than to your own."

"You mean the sleepers?" said Mrs Wyllys.

"I mean the watch below. There is nothing so sweet to the foremast mariner as his sleep; for it is the most precarious of all his enjoyments: on the other hand, perhaps, it is the most treacherous companion the Commander knows."

"And why is the rest of the superior so much less grateful than that of the common man?"

"Because he pillows his head on responsibility."

"You are young, Mr Wilder, for a trust like this you bear."

"It is a service which makes us all prematurely old."

"Then, why not quit it?" said Gertrude, a little hastily.

"Quit it!" he replied, gazing at her intently, for an instant, while he suspended his reply. "It would be to me like quitting the air we breathe."

"Have you so long been devoted to your profession?" resumed Mrs Wyllys, bending her thoughtful eye, from the ingenuous countenance of her pupil, once more towards the features of him she addressed.

"I have reason to think I was born on the sea."

"Think! You surely know your birth-place."

"We are all of us dependant on the testimony of others," said Wilder, smiling, "for the account of that important event. My earliest recollections are blended with the sight of the ocean, and I can hardly say that I am a creature of the land at all."

"You have, at least, been fortunate in those who have had the charge to watch over your education, and your younger days."

"I have!" he answered, with strong emphasis.



Then, after shading his face an instant with his hands, he arose, and added, with a melancholy smile: "And now to my last duty for the twenty four hours. Have you a disposition to look at the night? So skilful and so stout a sailor should not seek her birth, without passing an opinion on the weather."

The governess took his offered arm, and, with his aid, ascended the stairs of the cabin in silence, each seemingly finding sufficient employment in meditation. She was followed by the more youthful, and therefore more active Gertrude, who joined them, as they stood together, on the weather side of the quarter-deck.

The night was rather misty than dark. A full and bright moon had arisen; but it pursued its path, through the heavens, behind a body of dusky clouds, that was much too dense for any borrowed rays to penetrate. Here and there, a straggling gleam appeared to find its way through a covering of vapour less dense than the rest, and fell upon the water like the dim illumination of a distant taper. As the wind was fresh and easterly, the sea seemed to throw upward, from its agitated surface, more light than it received; long lines of white, glittering foam following each other, and lending, at moments, a distinctness to the surface of the waters, that the heavens themselves wanted. The ship was bowed low on its side; and, as it entered each rolling swell of the ocean, a wide crescent of foam was driven ahead, as if the element gambolled along its path. But, though the time was propitious, the wind not absolutely adverse, and the heavens rather gloomy than threatening, an uncertain (and, to a landsman, it might seem an unnatural) light gave to the view a character of the wildest loneliness.

Gertrude shuddered, on reaching the deck, while she murmured an expression of strange delight.



Even Mrs Wyllys gazed upon the dark waves, that were heaving and setting in the horizon, around which was shed most of that radiance that seemed so supernatural, with a deep conviction that she was now entirely in the hands of the Being who had created the waters and the land. But Wilder looked upon the scene as one fastens his gaze on a placid sky. To him the view possessed neither novelty, nor dread, nor charm. Not so, however, with his more youthful and slightly enthusiastic companion. After the first sensations of awe had a little subsided, she exclaimed, in the fullest ardour of admiration,—

“One such sight would repay a month of imprisonment in a ship! You must find deep enjoyment in these scenes, Mr Wilder; you, who have them always at command.”

“Yes, yes; there is pleasure to be found in them, without doubt. I would that the wind had veer’d a point or two! I like not that sky, nor yonder misty horizon, nor this breeze hanging so dead at east.”

“The vessel makes great progress,” returned Mrs Wyllys, calmly, observing that the young man spoke without consciousness, and fearing the effect of his words on the mind of her pupil. “If we are going on our course, there is the appearance of a quick and prosperous passage.”

“True!” exclaimed Wilder, as though he had just become conscious of her presence. “Quite probable, and very true. Mr Earing, the air is getting too neavy for that duck. Hand all your top-gallant sails, and haul the ship up closer. Should the wind hang here at east-with-southing, we may want what offing we can get.”

The mate replied in the prompt and obedient manner which seamen use to their superiors; and, after scanning the signs of the weather for a moment, he promptly proceeded to see the order executed. While the men were on the yards furling the light



canvas, the females walked apart, leaving the young Commander to the uninterrupted discharge of his duty. But Wilder, so far from deeming it necessary to lend his attention to so ordinary a service, the moment after he had spoken, seemed perfectly unconscious that the mandate had issued from his mouth. He stood on the precise spot where the view of the ocean and the heavens had first caught his eye, and his gaze still continued fastened on the aspect of the two elements. His look was always in the direction of the wind, which, though far from a gale, often fell upon the sails of the ship in heavy and sullen puffs. After a long and anxious examination, the young mariner muttered his thoughts to himself, and commenced pacing the deck with rapid footsteps. Still he would make sudden and short pauses, and again rivet his gaze on the point of the compass whence the blasts came sweeping across the waste of waters; as though he distrusted the weather, and would fain cause his keen glance to penetrate the gloom of night, in order to relieve some painful doubts. At length his step became arrested, in one of those quick turns that he made at each end of his narrow walk. Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude stood nigh, and were enabled to read something of the anxious character of his countenance, as his eye became suddenly fastened on a distant point of the ocean, though in a quarter exactly opposite to that whither his former looks had been directed.

"Do you so much distrust the weather?" asked the governess, when she thought his examination had endured long enough to become ominous of evil.

"One looks not to leeward for the signs of the weather, in a breeze like this," was the answer.

"What see you, then, to fasten your eye on thus intently?"

Wilder slowly raised his arm, and was about to



point with his finger, when the limb suddenly fell again.

"It was delusion!" he muttered, turning quickly on his heel, and pacing the deck still more rapidly than ever.

His companions watched the extraordinary, and apparently unconscious, movements of the young Commander, with amazement, and not without a little secret dismay. Their own looks wandered over the expanse of troubled water to leeward, but nowhere could they see more than the tossing element, capped with those ridges of garish foam which served only to make the chilling waste more dreary and imposing.

"We see nothing," said Gertrude, when Wilder again stopped in his walk, and once more gazed, as before, on the seeming void.

"Look!" he answered, directing their eyes with his finger: "Is there nothing there?"

"Nothing."

"You look into the sea. Here, just where the heavens and the waters meet; along that streak of misty light, into which the waves are tossing themselves, like little hillocks on the land. There; now 'tis smooth again, and my eyes did not deceive me. By heavens, it is a ship!"

"Sail, ho!" shouted a voice, from out atop, which sounded in the ears of our adventurer like the croaking of some sinister spirit, sweeping across the deep.

"Whereaway?" was the stern demand.

"Here on our lee-quarter, sir," returned the seaman, at the top of his voice. "I make her out a ship close-hauled; but, for an hour past, she has looked more like mist than a vessel."

"Ay, he is right," muttered Wilder; "and yet 'tis a strange thing that a ship should be just there."



"And why stranger than that we are here?"

"Why!" said the young man, regarding Mrs Wyllys, who had put this question, with a perfectly unconscious eye. "I say, 'tis strange she should be there. I would she were steering northward."

"But you give no reason. Are we always to have warnings from you," she continued, with a smile, "without reasons? Do you deem us so utterly unworthy of a reason? or do you think us incapable of thought on a subject connected with the sea? You have failed to make the essay, and are too quick to decide. Try us this once. We may possibly deceive your expectations."

Wilder laughed faintly, and bowed, as if he recollected himself. Still he entered into no explanation; but again turned his gaze on the quarter of the ocean where the strange sail was said to be. The females followed his example, but ever with the same want of success. As Gertrude expressed her disappointment aloud, the soft tones of the complainant found their way to the ears of our adventurer.

"You see the streak of dim light," he said, again pointing across the waste. "The clouds have lifted a little there, but the spray of the sea is floating between us and the opening. Her spars look like the delicate work of a spider, against the sky, and yet you see there are all the proportions, with the three masts, of a noble ship."

Aided by these minute directions, Gertrude at length caught a glimpse of the faint object, and soon succeeded in giving the true direction to the look of her governess also. Nothing was visible but the dim outline, not unaptly described by Wilder himself as resembling a spider's web.

"It must be a ship!" said Mrs Wyllys; "but at a vast distance."



"Hum! Would it were farther. I could wish that vessel any where but there."

"And why not there? Have you reason to dread an enemy has been waiting for us in this particular spot?"

"No: Still I like not her position. Would to God she were going north!"

"It is some vessel from the port of New York, steering to his Majesty's islands in the Caribbean sea."

"Not so," said Wilder, shaking his head; "no vessel, from under the heights of Never-sink, could gain that offing with a wind like this!"

"It is then some ship going into the same place, or perhaps bound for one of the bays of the Middle Colonies!"

"Her road would be too plain to be mistaken. See; the stranger is close upon a wind."

"It may be a trader, or a cruiser coming *from* one of the places I have named."

"Neither. The wind has had too much northing, the last two days, for that."

"It is a vessel that we have overtaken, and which has come out of the waters of Long Island Sound."

"That, indeed, may we yet hope," muttered Wilder, in a smothered voice.

The governess, who had put the foregoing questions, in order to extract from the Commander of the "Caroline" the information he so pertinaciously withheld, had now exhausted all her own knowledge on the subject, and was compelled to await his further pleasure in the matter, or resort to the less equivocal means of direct interrogation. But the busy state of Wilder's thoughts left her no immediate opportunity to pursue the subject. He soon summoned the officer of the watch to his councils, and they consulted together, apart, for many minutes.



The hardy, but far from quick witted, seaman who filled the second station in the ship saw nothing so remarkable in the appearance of a strange sail, in the precise spot where the dim and nearly aerial image of the unknown vessel was still visible; nor did he hesitate to pronounce her some honest trader, bent, like themselves, on her purpose of lawful commerce. It would seem that his Commander thought otherwise, as will appear by the short dialogue that passed between them.

"Is it not extraordinary that she should be just there?" demanded Wilder, after they had, each in turn, made a closer examination of the faint object, by the aid of an excellent night-glass.

"She would be better off, here," returned the literal seaman, who only had an eye for the nautical situation of the stranger; "and we should be none the worse for being a dozen leagues more to the eastward, ourselves. If the wind holds here at east-by-south-half-south, we shall have need of all that offing. I got jammed once between Hatteras and the Gulf"—

"But, do you not perceive that she is where no vessel could or ought to be, unless she has run exactly the same course with ourselves?" interrupted Wilder. "Nothing, from any harbour south of New York, could have such northing, as the wind has been; while nothing, from the Colony of York would stand on this tack, if bound east; or would be here, if going southward."

The plain-going ideas of the honest mate were open to a reasoning which the reader may find a little obscure; for his mind contained a sort of chart of the ocean, to which he could at any time refer, with a proper discrimination between the various winds, and all the different points of the compass. When properly directed, he was not slow to see, as a mariner, the probable justice of his young Com-



mander's inferences; and then wonder, in its turn, began to take possession of his more obtuse faculties.

"It is downright unnatural, truly, that the fellow should be there!" he replied, shaking his head, but meaning no more than that it was entirely out of the order of nautical propriety; "I see the philosophy of what you say, Captain Wilder; and little do I know how to explain it. It is a ship, to a mortal certainty!"

"Of that there is no doubt. But a ship most strangely placed!"

"I doubled the Good-Hope in the year '46," continued the other, "and saw a vessel lying, as it might be, here, on our weather-bow—which is just opposite to this fellow, since he is on our lee-quarter—but there I saw a ship standing for an hour across our fore-foot, and yet, though we set the azimuth, not a degree did he budge, starboard or larboard, during all that time, which, as it was heavy weather, was, to say the least, something out of the common order."

"It was remarkable!" returned Wilder, with an air so vacant, as to prove that he rather communed with himself than attended to his companion.

"There are mariners who say that the flying Dutchman cruises off that Cape, and that he often gets on the weather side of a stranger, and bears down upon him, like a ship about to lay him aboard. Many is the King's cruiser, as they say, that has turned her hands up from a sweet sleep, when the look-outs have seen a double decker coming down in the night, with ports up, and batteries lighted; but then this can't be any such craft as the Dutchman, since she is, at the most, no more than a large sloop of war, if a cruiser at all."

"No, no," said Wilder, "this can never be the Dutchman."

"Yon vessel shows no lights; and, for that mat-



ter, she has such a misty look, that one might well question its being a ship at all. Then, again, the Dutchman is always seen to windward, and the strange sail we have here lies broad upon our lee-quarter!"

"It is no Dutchman," said Wilder, drawing a long breath, like a man awaking from a trance. "Main topmast-cross-trees, there!"

The man who was stationed aloft answered to this hail in the customary manner, the short conversation that succeeded being necessarily maintained in shouts, rather than in speeches.

"How long have you seen the stranger?" was the first demand of Wilder.

"I have just come aloft, sir; but the man I relieved tells me more than an hour."

"And has the man you relieved come down? or what is that I see sitting on the lee side of the mast-head?"

"'Tis Bob Brace, sir; who says he cannot sleep, and so he stays upon the yard to keep me company."

"Send the man down. I would speak to him."

While the wakeful seaman was descending the rigging, the two officers continued silent, each seeming to find sufficient occupation in musing on what had already passed.

"And why are you not in your hammock?" said Wilder, a little sternly, to the man who, in obedience to his order, had descended to the quarter-deck.

"I am not sleep-bound, your Honour, and therefore I had the mind to pass another hour aloft."

"And why are you, who have two night-watches to keep already, so willing to enlist in a third?"

"To own the truth, sir, my mind has been a little misgiving about this passage, since the moment we lifted our anchor."

Mrs Wyllys and Gertrude, who were auditors, in-



sensibly drew nigher, to listen, with a species of interest which betrayed itself by the thrilling of nerves, and an accelerated movement of the pulse.

"And you have your doubts, sir!" exclaimed the Captain, in a tone of slight contempt. "Pray, may I ask what you have seen, on board here, to make you distrust the ship?"

"No harm in asking, your Honour," returned the seaman, crushing the hat he held between two hands that had a gripe like a couple of vices, "and so I hope there is none in answering. I pulled an oar in the boat after the old man this morning, and I cannot say I like the manner in which he got from the chase. Then, there is something in the ship to leeward that comes athwart my fancy like a drag, and I confess, your Honour, that I should make but little headway in a nap, though I should try the swing of a hammock."

"How long is it since you made the ship to leeward?" gravely demanded Wilder.

"I will not swear that a real living ship has been made out at all, sir. Something I did see, just before the bell struck seven, and there it is, just as clear and just as dim, to be seen now by them that have good eyes."

"And how did she bear when you first saw her?"

"Two or three points more toward the beam than it is now."

"Then we are passing her!" exclaimed Wilder, with a pleasure too evident to be concealed.

"No, your Honour, no. You forget, sir, the ship has come closer to the wind since the middle watch was set."

"True," returned his young Commander, in a tone of disappointment; "true, very true. And her bearing has not changed since you first made her?"

"Not by compass, sir. It is a quick boat that, or it would never hold such way with the 'Royal



Caroline,' and that too upon a stiffened bow-line, which every body knows is the real play of this ship."

"Go, get you to your hammock. In the morning we may have a better look at the fellow."

"And—you hear me, sir," added the attentive mate, "do not keep the men's eyes open below, with a tale as long as the short cable, but take your own natural rest, and leave all others, that have clear consciences, to do the same."

"Mr Earing," said Wilder, as the seaman reluctantly proceeded towards his place of rest, "we will bring the ship upon the other tack, and get more easting, while the land is so far from us. This course will be setting us upon Hatteras. Besides"——

"Yes, sir," the mate replied, observing his superior to hesitate, "as you were saying,—besides, no one can foretel the length of a gale, nor the real quarter it may come from."

"Precisely. No one can answer for the weather. The men are scarcely in their hammocks; turn them up at once, sir, before their eyes are heavy, and we will bring the ship's head the other way."

The mate instantly sounded the well-known cry, which summoned the watch below to the assistance of their shipmates on the deck. Little delay occurred, and not a word was uttered, but the short, authoritative mandates which Wilder saw fit to deliver from his own lips. No longer pressed up against the wind, the ship, obedient to her helm, gracefully began to incline her head from the waves, and to bring the wind abeam. Then, instead of breasting and mounting the endless hillocks, like a being that toiled heavily along its path, she fell into the trough of the sea, from which she issued like a courser, who, having conquered an ascent, shoots along the track with redoubled velocity. For an instant the wind appear-



ed to have lulled, though the wide ridge of foam, which rolled along on each side the vessel's bows, sufficiently proclaimed that she was skimming lightly before it. In another moment, the tall spars began to incline again to the west, and the vessel came swooping up to the wind, until her plunges and shocks against the seas were renewed as violently as before. When every yard and sheet were properly trimmed to meet the new position of the vessel, Wilder turned anxiously to get a glimpse of the stranger. A minute was lost in ascertaining the precise spot where he ought to appear; for, in such a chaos of water, and with no guide but the judgment, the eye was apt to deceive itself, by referring to the nearer and more familiar objects by which the spectator was surrounded.

"The stranger has vanished!" said Earing, with a voice in whose tones mental relief and distrust were both, at the same moment, oddly manifesting themselves.

"He should be on this quarter; but I confess I see him not!"

"Ay, ay, sir; this is the way that the midnight cruiser off the Hope is said to come and go. There are men who have seen that vessel shut in by a fog, in as fine a star-light night as was ever met in a southern latitude. But then this cannot be the Dutchman, since it is so many long leagues from the pitch of the Cape to the coast of North-America.

"Here he lies; and, by heaven! he has already gone about!" cried Wilder.

The truth of what our young adventurer had just affirmed was indeed now sufficiently evident to the eye of any seaman. The same diminutive and misty tracery, as before, was to be seen on the light background of the threatening horizon, looking not unlike the faintest shadows cast upon some brighter surface by the deception of the phantasmagoria. But to the



mariners, who so well knew how to distinguish between the different lines of her masts, it was very evident that her course had been suddenly and dexterously changed, and that she was now steering no longer to the south and west, but, like themselves, holding her way towards the north-east. The fact appeared to make a sensible impression on them all; though probably, had their reasons been sifted, they would have been found to be entirely different.

"That ship has truly tacked!" Earing exclaimed, after a long, meditative pause, and with a voice in which distrust, or rather awe, was beginning to get the ascendancy. "Long as I have followed the sea, have I never before seen a vessel tack against such a head-beating sea. He must have been all shaking in the wind, when we gave him the last look, or we should not have lost sight of him."

"A lively and quick-working vessel might do it," said Wilder; "especially if strong handed."

"Ay, the hand of Beelzebub is always strong; and a light job would he make of it, in forcing even a dull craft to sail."

"Mr Earing," interrupted Wilder, "we will pack upon the 'Caroline,' and try our sailing with this taunting stranger. Get the main tack aboard, and set the top-gallant-sail."

The slow-minded mate would have remonstrated against the order, had he dared; but there was that, in the calm, subdued, but deep tones of his young Commander, which admonished him of the hazard. He was not wrong, however, in considering the duty he was now to perform as one not without some risk. The ship was already moving under quite as much canvas as he deemed it prudent to show at such an hour, and with so many threatening symptoms of heavier weather hanging about the horizon. The necessary orders were, however, repeated as promptly as they had been given. The seamen had



already begun to consider the stranger, and to converse among themselves concerning his appearance and situation; and they obeyed with an alacrity that might perhaps have been traced to a secret but common wish to escape from his vicinity. The sails were successively and speedily set; and then each man folded his arms, and stood gazing steadily and intently at the shadowy object to leeward, in order to witness the effect of the change.

The "Royal Caroline" seemed, like her crew, sensible of the necessity of increasing her speed. As she felt the pressure of the broad sheets of canvas that had just been distended, the ship bowed lower, and appeared to recline on the bed of water which rose under her lee nearly to the scuppers. On the other side, the dark planks, and polished copper, lay bare for many feet, though often washed by the waves that came sweeping along her length, green and angrily, still capped, as usual, with crests of lucid foam. The shocks, as the vessel tilted against the billows, were becoming every moment more severe; and, from each encounter, a bright cloud of spray arose, which either fell glittering on the deck, or drove, in brilliant mist, across the rolling water, far to leeward.

Wilder long watched the ship, with an excited mien, but with all the intelligence of a seaman. Once or twice, when she trembled, and appeared to stop, in her violent encounter with a wave, as suddenly as though she had struck a rock, his lips severed, and he was about to give the order to reduce the sail; but a glance at the misty looking image on the western horizon seemed ever to cause his mind to change its purpose. Like a desperate adventurer, who had cast his fortunes on some hazardous experiment, he appeared to await the issue with a resolution that was as haughty as it was unconquerable.



"That top-mast is bending like a whip," muttered the careful Earing, at his elbow.

"Let it go; we have spare spars to put in its place," was the answer.

"I have always found the 'Caroline' leaky after she has been strained by driving her against the sea."

"We have our pumps."

"True, sir; but, in my poor judgment, it is idle to think of outsailing a craft that the devil commands, if he does not altogether handle it."

"One will never know that, Mr Earing, till he tries."

"We gave the Dutchman a chance of that sort; and, I must say, we not only had the most canvas spread, but much the best of the wind: And what good did it all do? there he lay, under his three top-sails, driver, and jib; and we, with studding sails alow and aloft, couldn't alter his bearing a foot."

"The Dutchman is never seen in a northern latitude."

"Well, I cannot say he is," returned Earing, in a sort of compelled resignation; "but he who has put that flyer off the Cape may have found the cruise so profitable, as to wish to send another ship into these seas."

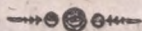
Wilder made no reply. He had either humoured the superstitious apprehension of his mate enough, or his mind was too intent on its principal object, to dwell longer on a foreign subject.

Notwithstanding the seas that met her advance, in such quick succession as greatly to retard her progress, the Bristol trader had soon toiled her way through a league of the troubled element. At every plunge she took, the bow divided a mass of water, that appeared, at each instant, to become more vast and more violent in its rushing; and more than once the struggling hull was nearly buried forward, in



some wave which it had equal difficulty in mounting or penetrating.

The mariners narrowly watched the smallest movements of their vessel. Not a man left her deck, for hours. The superstitious awe, which had taken such deep hold of the untutored faculties of the chief mate, had not been slow to extend its influence to the meanest of her crew. Even the accident which had befallen their former Commander, and the sudden and mysterious manner in which the young officer, who now trod the quarter-deck, so singularly firm and calm, under circumstances deemed so imposing, had their influence in heightening the wild impression. The impunity with which the "Caroline" bore such a press of canvas, under the circumstances in which she was placed, added to their kindling admiration; and, ere Wilder had determined, in his own mind, on the powers of his ship, in comparison with those of the vessel that so strangely hung in the horizon, he was himself becoming the subject of unnatural and revolting suspicions to his own crew.



## CHAPTER XV.

——“I’ the name of truth,  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show?”—*Macbeth.*

THE division of employment that is found in Europe, and which brings, in its train, a peculiar and corresponding limitation of ideas, has never yet existed in our country. If our artisans have, in consequence, been less perfect in their several handicrafts, they have ever been remarkable for intelligence of a more general character. Superstition is,



however, a quality that seems indigenous to the ocean. Few common mariners are exempt from its influence, in a greater or less degree ; though it is found to exist, among the seamen of different people, in forms that are tempered by their respective national habits and peculiar opinions. The sailor of the Baltic has his secret rites, and his manner of propitiating the gods of the wind ; the Mediterranean mariner tears his hair, and kneels before the shrine of some impotent saint, when his own hand might better do the service he implores ; while the more skilful Englishman sees the spirits of the dead in the storm, and hears the cries of a lost messmate in the gusts that sweep the waste he navigates. Even the better instructed and still more reasoning American has not been able to shake entirely off the secret influence of a sentiment that seems the concomitant of his condition.

There is a majesty, in the might of the great deep, that has a tendency to keep open the avenues of that dependant credulity which more or less besets the mind of every man, however he may have fortified his intellect by thought. With the firmament above him, and wandering on an interminable waste of water, the less gifted seaman is tempted, at every step of his pilgrimage, to seek the relief of some propitious omen. The few which are supported by scientific causes give support to the many that have their origin only in his own excited and doubting temperament. The gambols of the dolphin, the earnest and busy passage of the porpoise, the ponderous sporting of the unwieldy whale, and the screams of the marine birds, have all, like the signs of the ancient soothsayers, their attendant consequences of good or evil. The confusion between things which are explicable, and things which are not, gradually brings the mind of the mariner to a state in which any exciting and unnatural sentiment is welcome, if it be



for no other reason than that, like the vast element on which he passes his life, it bears the impression of what is thought a supernatural, because it is an incomprehensible, power.

The crew of the "Royal Caroline" had not even the advantage of being natives of a land where necessity and habit have united to bring every man's faculties into exercise, to a certain extent at least. They were all from that distant island that has been, and still continues to be, the hive of nations, which are probably fated to carry her name to a time when the sight of her fallen power shall be sought as a curiosity, like the remains of a city in a desert.

The whole events of that day of which we are now writing had a tendency to arouse the latent superstition of these men. It has already been said, that the calamity which had befallen their former Commander, and the manner in which a stranger had succeeded to his authority, had their influence in increasing their disposition to doubt. The sail to leeward appeared most inopportunistically for the character of our adventurer, who had not yet enjoyed a fitting opportunity to secure the confidence of his inferiors, before such untoward circumstances occurred as threatened to deprive him of it for ever.

There has existed but one occasion for introducing to the reader the mate who filled the station in the ship next to that of Earing. He was called Night-head; a name that was, in some measure, indicative of a certain misty obscurity that beset his superior member. The qualities of his mind may be appreciated by the few reflections he saw fit to make on the escape of the old mariner whom Wilder had intended to visit with a portion of his indignation. This individual, as he was but one degree removed from the common men in situation, so was he every way qualified to maintain that association with the crew which was, in some measure, necessary between



them. His influence among them was commensurate to his opportunities of intercourse, and his sentiments were very generally received with a portion of that deference which is thought to be due to the opinions of an oracle.

After the ship had been worn, and during the time that Wilder, with a view to lose sight of his unwelcome neighbour, was endeavouring to urge her through the seas in the manner already described, this stubborn and mystified tar remained in the waist of the vessel, surrounded by a few of the older and more experienced seamen, holding converse on the remarkable appearance of the phantom to leeward, and of the extraordinary manner in which their unknown officer saw fit to attest the enduring qualities of their own vessel. We shall commence our relation of the dialogue at a point where Nighthead saw fit to discontinue his distant inuendos, in order to deal more directly with the subject he had under discussion.

“I have heard it said, by older sea-faring men than any in this ship,” he continued, “that the devil has been known to send one of his mates aboard a lawful trader, to lead her astray among shoals and quicksands, in order that he might make a wreck, and get his share of the salvage, among the souls of the people. What man can say who gets into the cabin, when an unknown name stands first in the shipping list of a vessel?”

“The stranger is shut in by a cloud!” exclaimed one of the mariners, who, while he listened to the philosophy of his officer, still kept an eye riveted on the mysterious object to leeward.

“Ay, ay; it would occasion no surprise to see that craft steering into the moon! Luck is like a fly-block and its yard: when one goes up, the other comes down. They say the red-coats ashore have had their turn of fortune, and it is time we honest



seamen look out for our squalls. I have doubled the Horn, brothers, in a King's ship, and I have seen the bright cloud that never sets, and have held a living corposant in my own hand: But these are things which any man may look on, who will go upon a yard in a gale, or ship aboard a Southseaman: Still, I pronounce it uncommon for a vessel to see her shadow in the haze, as we have ours at this moment; for there it comes again!—hereaway, between the after-shroud and the backstay—or for a trader to carry sail in a fashion that would make every knee in a bomb-ketch work like a tooth-brush fiddling across a passenger's mouth, after he had had a smart bout with the sea sickness."

"And yet the lad holds the ship in hand," said the oldest of all the seamen, who kept his gaze fastened on the proceedings of Wilder; "he is driving her through it in a mad manner, I will allow; but yet, so far, he has not parted a yarn."

"Yarns!" repeated the mate, in a tone of strong contempt; "what signify yarns, when the whole cable is to snap, and in such a fashion as to leave no hope for the anchor, except in a buoy rope? Hark ye, old Bill; the devil never finishes his jobs by halves: What is to happen will happen bodily; and no easing-off, as if you were lowering the Captain's lady into a boat, and he on deck to see fair play."

"Mr Nighthead knows how to keep a ship's reckoning in all weathers!" said another, whose manner sufficiently announced the dependance he himself placed on the capacity of the second mate.

"And no credit to me for the same. I have seen all services, and handled every rig, from a lugger to a double-decker! Few men can say more in their own favour than myself; for the little I know has been got by much hardship, and small schooling. But what matters information, or even seamanship, against witchcraft, or the workings of one whom I



don't choose to name, seeing that there is no use in offending any gentleman unnecessarily? I say, brothers, that this ship is packed upon in a fashion that no prudent seaman ought to, or would, allow."

A general murmur announced that most, if not all, of his hearers accorded in his opinion.

"Let us examine calmly and reasonably, and in a manner becoming enlightened Englishmen, into the whole state of the case," the mate continued, casting an eye obliquely over his shoulder, perhaps to make sure that the individual, of whose displeasure he stood in such salutary awe, was not actually at his elbow. "We are all of us, to a man, native-born islanders, without a drop of foreign blood among us; not so much as a Scotchman or an Irishman in the ship. Let us therefore look into the philosophy of this affair, with that sort of judgment which becomes our breeding. In the first place, here is honest Nicholas Nichols slips from this here water-cask, and breaks me a leg! Now, brothers, I've known men to fall from tops and yards, and lighter damage done. But what matters it, to a certain person, how far he throws his man, since he has only to lift a finger to get us all hanged? Then, comes me aboard here a stranger, with a look of the colonies about him, and none of your plain-dealing, out-and-out, smooth English faces, such as a man can cover with the flat of his hand."——

"The lad is well enough to the eye," interrupted the old mariner.

"Ay, therein lies the whole deviltry of this matter! He is good-looking, I grant ye; but it is not such good-looking as an Englishman loves. There is a meaning about him that I don't like; for I never likes too much meaning in a man's countenance, seeing that it is not always easy to understand what he would be doing. Then, this stranger gets to be Master of the ship, or, what is the same thing, next



to Master ; while he who should be on deck giving his orders, in a time like this, is lying in his birth unable to tack himself, much less to put the vessel about ; and yet no man can say how the thing came to pass."

"He drove a bargain with the consignee for the station, and right glad did the cunning merchant seem to get so tight a youth to take charge of the 'Caroline.'"

"Ah ! a merchant is, like the rest of us, made of nothing better than clay ; and, what is worse, it is seldom that, in putting him together, he is dampened with salt water. Many is the trader that has douzed his spectacles, and shut his account-books, to step aside to over-reach his neighbour, and then come back to find that he has over-reached himself. Mr Bale, no doubt, thought he was doing the clever thing for the owners, when he shipped this Mr Wilder ; but then, perhaps, he did not know that the vessel was sold to ——— It becomes a plain-going seaman to have a respect for all he sails under ; so I will not, unnecessarily, name the person who, I believe, has got, whether he came by it in a fair purchase or not, no small right in this vessel."

"I have never seen a ship got out of irons more handsomely than he handled the 'Caroline' this very morning."

Nighthead now indulged in a low, but what to his listeners appeared to be an exceedingly meaning, laugh.

"When a ship has a certain sort of Captain, one is not to be surprised at any thing," he answered, the instant his significant merriment had ceased. "For my own part, I shipped to go from Bristol to the Carolinas and Jamaica, touching at Newport out and home ; and I will say, boldly, I have no wish to go any where else. As to backing the 'Caroline' from her awkward birth alongside the slaver, why



it was well done ; most too well for so young a mariner. Had I done the thing myself, it could not have been much better. But what think you, brothers, of the old man in the skiff? There was a chase, and an escape, such as few old sea-dogs have the fortune to behold ! I have heard of a smuggler that was chased a hundred times by his Majesty's cutters, in the chops of the Channel, and which always had a fog handy to run into, but out of which no man could truly say he ever saw her come again ! This skiff may have plied between the land and that Guernseyman, for any thing I know to the contrary ; but it is not a boat I wish to pull a scull in."

"That *was* a remarkable flight!" exclaimed the elder seaman, whose faith in the character of our adventurer began to give way gradually, before such an accumulation of testimony.

"I call it so ; though other men may possibly know better than I, who have only followed the water five-and-thirty years. Then, here is the sea getting up in an unaccountable manner ! and look at these rags of clouds, which darken the heavens ! and yet there is light enough, coming from the ocean, for a good scholar to read by!"

"I've often seen the weather as it is now."

"Ay, who has not? It is seldom that any man, let him come from what part he will, makes his first voyage as Captain. Let who will be out to-night upon the water, I'll engage he has been there before. I have seen worse looking skies, and even worse looking water, than this ; but I never knew any good come of either. The night I was wreck'd in the bay of"—

"In the waist there !" cried the calm, authoritative tones of Wilder.

Had a warning voice arisen from the turbulent and rushing ocean itself, it would not have sounded more alarming, in the startled ears of the conscious



seamen, than this sudden hail. Their young Commander found it necessary to repeat it, before even Nighthead, the proper and official spokesman, could muster resolution to answer.

"Get the fore-top-gallant-sail on the ship, sir," continued Wilder, when the customary reply let him know that he had been heard.

The mate and his companions regarded each other, for a moment, in dull admiration; and many a melancholy shake of the head was exchanged, before one of the party threw himself into the weather-rigging, and proceeded aloft, with a doubting mind, in order to loosen the sail in question.

There was certainly enough, in the desperate manner with which Wilder pressed the canvas on the vessel, to excite distrust, either of his intentions or judgment, in the opinions of men less influenced by superstition than those it was now his lot to command. It had long been apparent to Earing, and his more ignorant, and consequently more obstinate, brother officer, that their young superior had the same desire to escape from the spectral-looking ship, which so strangely followed their movements, as they had themselves. They only differed in the mode; but this difference was so very material, that the two mates consulted together apart, and then Earing, something stimulated by the hardy opinions of his coadjutor, approached his Commander, with the determination of delivering the results of their united judgments, with that sort of directness which he thought the occasion now demanded. But there was that in the steady eye and imposing mien of Wilder, that caused him to touch on the dangerous subject with a discretion and circumlocution that were a little remarkable for the individual. He stood watching the effect of the sail recently spread, for several minutes, before he even presumed to open his mouth. But a terrible encounter, between



the vessel and a wave that lifted its angry crest apparently some dozen feet above the approaching bows, gave him courage to proceed, by admonishing him afresh of the danger of continuing silent.

"I do not see that we drop the stranger, though the ship is wallowing through the water so heavily," he commenced, determined to be as circumspect as possible in his advances.

Wilder bent another of his frequent glances on the misty object in the horizon, and then turned his frowning eye towards the point whence the wind proceeded, as if he would defy its heaviest blasts; he, however, made no answer.

"We have ever found the crew discontented at the pumps, sir," resumed the other, after a pause sufficient for the reply he in vain expected; "I need not tell an officer, who knows his duty so well, that seamen rarely love their pumps."

"Whatever I may find necessary to order, Mr Earing, this ship's company will find it necessary to execute."

There was a deep settled air of authority, in the manner with which this tardy answer was given, that did not fail of its impression. Earing recoiled a step, with a submissive manner, and affected to be lost in consulting the driving masses of the clouds; then, summoning his resolution, he attempted to renew the attack in a different quarter.

"Is it your deliberate opinion, Captain Wilder," he said, using the title to which the claim of our adventurer might well be questioned, with a view to propitiate him; "is it then your deliberate opinion, that the 'Royal Caroline' can, by any human means, be made to drop yonder vessel?"

"I fear not," returned the young man, drawing a breath so long, that all his secret concern seemed struggling in his breast for utterance.



"And, sir, with proper submission to your better education and authority in this ship, I *know* not. I have often seen these matches tried in my time; and well do I know that nothing is gained by straining a vessel, with the hope of getting to windward of one of these flyers!"

"Take you the glass, Earing, and tell me under what canvas the stranger holds his way, and what may be his distance," said Wilder, thoughtfully, and without appearing to advert at all to what the other had just observed.

The honest and well-meaning mate deposed his hat on the quarter-deck, and, with an air of great respect, did as he was desired. Nor did he deem it necessary to give a precipitate answer to either of the interrogatories. When, however, his look had been long, grave, and deeply absorbed, he closed the glass with the palm of his broad hand, and replied, with the manner of one whose opinion was sufficiently matured.

"If yonder sail had been built and fitted like other mortal craft," he said, "I should not be backward in pronouncing her a full-rigged ship, under three single-reefed topsails, courses, spanker, and jib."

"Has she no more?"

"To that I would qualify, provided an opportunity were given me to make sure that she is, in all respects, as other vessels are."

"And yet, Earing, with all this press of canvas, by the compass we have not left her a foot."

"Lord, sir," returned the mate, shaking his head, like one who was well convinced of the folly of such efforts, "if you should split every cloth in the main-course, by carrying on the ship you will never alter the bearings of that craft an inch, till the sun rises! Then, indeed, such as have eyes, that are good enough, might perhaps see her sailing about



among the clouds ; though it has never been my fortune, be it bad or be it good, to fall in with one of these cruisers after the day has fairly dawned."

"And the distance?" said Wilder; "you have not yet spoken of her distance."

"That is much as people choose to measure. She may be here, nigh enough to toss a biscuit into our tops; or she may be there, where she seems to be, hull down in the horizon."

"But, if where she seems to be?"

"Why, she *seems* to be a vessel of about six hundred tons; and, judging from appearances only, a man might be tempted to say she was a couple of leagues, more or less, under our lee."

"I put her at the same! Six miles to windward is not a little advantage, in a hard chase. By heavens, Earing, I'll drive the 'Caroline' out of water, but I'll leave him!"

"That might be done, if the ship had wings like a curlew, or a sea-gull; but, as it is, I think we are more likely to drive her under."

"She bears her canvas well, so far. You know not what the boat can do, when urged."

"I have seen her sailed in all weathers, Captain Wilder, but"——

His mouth was suddenly closed. A vast black wave reared itself between the ship and the eastern horizon, and came rolling onward, seeming to threaten to engulf all before it. Even Wilder watched the shock with breathless anxiety, conscious, for the moment, that he had exceeded the bounds of sound discretion in urging his ship so powerfully against such a mass of water. The sea broke a few fathoms from the bows of the "Caroline," and sent its surge in a flood of foam upon her decks. For half a minute, the forward part of the vessel disappeared, as though, unable to mount the swell, it were striving



to go through it, and then she heavily emerged, gemmed with a million of the scintillating insects of the ocean. The ship had stopped, trembling in every joint, throughout her massive and powerful frame, like some affrighted courser; and, when she resumed her course, it was with a moderation that appeared to warn those who governed her movements of their indiscretion.

Earing faced his Commander in silence, perfectly conscious that nothing he could utter contained an argument like this. The seamen no longer hesitated to mutter their disapprobation aloud, and many a prophetic opinion was ventured concerning the consequences of such reckless risks. To all this Wilder turned a deaf or an insensible ear. Firm in his own secret purpose, he would have braved a greater hazard, to accomplish his object. But a distinct though smothered shriek, from the stern of the vessel, reminded him of the fears of others. Turning quickly on his heel, he approached the still trembling Gertrude and her governess, who had both been, throughout the whole of those long and tedious hours, inobtrusive, but deeply interested, observers of his smallest movements.

"The vessel bore that shock so well, I have great reliance on her powers," he said in a soothing voice, but with words that were intended to lull her into a blind security. "With a firm ship, a thorough seaman is never at a loss!"

"Mr Wilder," returned the governess, "I have seen much of this terrible element on which you live. It is therefore vain to think of deceiving me. I know that you are urging the ship beyond what is usual. Have you sufficient motive for this hardihood?"

"Madam,—I have!"

"And is it, like so many of your motives, to con-



tinue locked for ever in your own breast? or may we, who are equal participators in its consequences, claim to share equally in the reason?"

"Since you know so much of the profession," returned the young man, slightly laughing, but in tones that were rendered perhaps more alarming by the sounds produced in the unnatural effort, "you need not be told, that, in order to get a ship to windward, it is necessary to spread her canvas."

"You can, at least, answer one of my questions more directly: Is this wind sufficiently favourable to pass the dangerous shoals of the Hatteras?"

"I doubt it."

"Then, why not go to the place whence we came?"

"Will you consent to return?" demanded the youth, with the swiftness of thought.

"I would go to my father," said Gertrude, with a rapidity so nearly resembling his own, that the ardent girl appeared to want breath to utter the little she said.

"And I am willing, Mr Wilder, to abandon the ship entirely," calmly resumed the governess. "I require no explanation of all your mysterious warnings; restore us to our friends in Newport, and no further questions shall ever be asked."

"It might be done!" muttered our adventurer; "it might be done!—A few busy hours would do it, with this wind.—Mr Earing!"—

The mate was instantly at his elbow. Wilder pointed to the dim object to leeward; and, handing him the glass, desired that he would take another view. Each looked, in his turn, long and closely.

"He shows no more sail!" said the Commander impatiently, when his own prolonged gaze was ended.

"Not a cloth, sir. But what matters it, to such a



craft, how much canvas is spread, or how the wind blows ?”

“Earing, I think there is too much southing in this breeze ; and there is more brewing in yonder streak of dusky clouds on our beam. Let the ship fall off a couple of points, or more, and take the strain off the spars, by a pull upon the weather braces.”

The simple-minded mate heard the order with an astonishment he did not care to conceal. There needed no explanation, to teach his experienced faculties, that the effect would be to go over the same track they had just passed, and that it was, in substance, abandoning the objects of the voyage. He presumed to defer his compliance, in order to remonstrate.

“I hope there is no offence for an elderly seaman, like myself, Captain Wilder, in venturing an opinion on the weather,” he said. “When the pocket of the owner is interested, my judgment approves of going about, for I have no taste for land that the wind blows on, instead of off. But, by easing the ship with a reef or two, she would be jogging seaward ; and all we gain would be clear gain ; because it is so much off the Hatteras. Besides, who can say that to-morrow, or the next day, we sha’n’t have a puff out of America, here at north-west ?”

“A couple of points fall off, and a pull upon your weather braces,” said Wilder, with startling quickness.

It would have exceeded the peaceful and submissive temperament of the honest Earing, to have delayed any longer. The orders were given to the inferiors ; and, as a matter of course, they were obeyed—though ill-suppressed and portentous sounds of discontent, at the undetermined, and seemingly unreasonable, changes in their officer’s mind, might have



been heard issuing from the mouths of Nighthead, and other veterans of the crew.

But to all these symptoms of disaffection Wilder remained, as before, utterly indifferent. If he heard them at all, he either disdained to yield them any notice, or, guided by a temporizing policy, he chose to appear unconscious of their import. In the mean time, the vessel, like a bird whose wing had wearied with struggling against the tempest, and which inclines from the gale to dart along an easier course, glided swiftly away, quartering the crests of the waves, or sinking gracefully into their troughs, as she yielded to the force of a wind that was now made to be favourable. The sea rolled on, in a direction that was no longer adverse to her course; and, as she receded from the breeze, the quantity of sail she had spread was no longer found trying to her powers of endurance. Still she had, in the opinion of all her crew, quite enough canvas exposed to a night of such a portentous aspect. But not so, in the judgment of the stranger who was charged with the guidance of her destinies. In a voice that still admonished his inferiors of the danger of disobedience, he commanded several broad sheets of studding-sails to be set, in quick succession. Urged by these new impulses, the ship went careering over the waves; leaving a train of foam, in her track, that rivalled, in its volume and brightness, the tumbling summit of the largest swell.

When sail after sail had been set, until even Wilder was obliged to confess to himself that the "Royal Caroline," staunch as she was, would bear no more, our adventurer began to pace the deck again, and to cast his eyes about him, in order to watch the fruits of his new experiment. The change in the course of the Bristol trader had made a corresponding change in the apparent direction of the stranger, who yet floated in the horizon like a diminutive and



misty shadow. Still the unerring compass told the watchful mariner, that she continued to maintain the same relative position as when first seen. No effort, on the part of Wilder, could apparently alter her bearing an inch. Another hour soon passed away, during which, as the log told him, the "Caroline" had rolled through more than three leagues of water, and still there lay the stranger in the west, as though it were merely a lessened shadow of herself, cast by the "Caroline" upon the distant and dusky clouds. An alteration in his course exposed a broader surface of his canvas to the eyes of the spectators, but in nothing else was there any visible change. If his sails had been materially increased, the distance and the obscurity prevented even the understanding Earing from detecting it. Perhaps the excited mind of the worthy mate was too much disposed to believe in the miraculous powers possessed by his unaccountable neighbour, to admit of the full exercise of his experienced faculties on the occasion; but even Wilder, who vexed his sight, in often-repeated examinations, was obliged to confess to himself, that the stranger seemed to glide, across the waste of waters, more like a body floating in the air, than a ship resorting to the ordinary expedients of mariners.

Mrs Wyllys and her charge had, by this time, retired to their cabin; the former secretly felicitating herself on the prospect of soon quitting a vessel that had commenced its voyage under such sinister circumstances as to have deranged the equilibrium of even her well-governed and highly-disciplined mind. Gertrude was left in ignorance of the change. To her uninstructed eye, all appeared the same on the wilderness of the ocean; Wilder having it in his power to alter the direction of his vessel as often as he pleased, without his fairer and more youthful passenger being any the wiser for the same.

Not so, however, with the intelligent Commander



of the "Caroline" himself. To him there was neither obscurity nor doubt, in the midst of his midnight path. His eye had long been familiar with every star that rose from out the waving bed of the sea, to set in another dark and ragged outline of the element; nor was there a blast, that swept across the ocean, that his burning cheek could not tell from what quarter of the heavens it poured out its power. He knew, and understood, each inclination made by the bows of his ship; his mind kept even pace with her windings and turnings, in all her trackless wanderings; and he had little need to consult any of the accessories of his art, to tell him what course to steer, or in what manner to guide the movements of the nice machine he governed. Still was he unable to explain the extraordinary evolutions of the stranger. His smallest change seemed rather anticipated than followed; and his hopes of eluding a vigilance, that proved so watchful, was baffled by a facility of manœuvring, and a superiority of sailing, that really began to assume, even to his intelligent eyes, the appearance of some unaccountable agency.

While our adventurer was engaged in the gloomy musings that such impressions were not ill adapted to excite, the heavens and the sea began to exhibit another aspect. The bright streak which had so long hung along the eastern horizon, as though the curtain of the firmament had been slightly opened to admit a passage for the winds, was now suddenly closed; and heavy masses of black clouds began to gather in that quarter, until vast volumes of the vapour were piled upon the water, blending the two elements in one. On the other hand, the dark canopy lifted in the west, and a long belt of lurid light was shed over the view. In this flood of bright and portentous mist the stranger still floated, though there were moments when his faint and fanciful outlines seemed to be melting into thin air



## CHAPTER XVI.

—"Yet again? What do you here? Shall we give o'er, and drown? Have you a mind to sink?"—*Tempest.*

Our watchful adventurer was not blind to these well-known and sinister omens. No sooner did the peculiar atmosphere, by which the mysterious image that he so often examined was suddenly surrounded, catch his eye, than his voice was heard in the clear, powerful, and exciting notes of warning.

"Stand by," he called aloud, "to in all studding sails! Down with them!" he added, scarcely giving his former words time to reach the ears of his subordinates. "Down with every rag of them, fore and aft the ship! Man the top-gallant clew-lines, Mr Earing. Clew up, and clew down! In with every thing, cheerily, men! In!"

This was a language to which the crew of the "Caroline" were no strangers, and one which was doubly welcome; since the meanest seaman of them all had long thought that his unknown Commander had been heedlessly trifling with the safety of the vessel, by the hardy manner in which he disregarded the wild symptoms of the weather. But they undervalued the keen-eyed vigilance of Wilder. He had certainly driven the Bristol trader through the water at a rate she had never been known to have gone before; but, thus far, the facts themselves attested in his favour, since no injury was the consequence of what they deemed his temerity. At the quick, sudden order just given, however, the whole ship was instantly in an uproar. A dozen seamen called to each other, from different parts of the vessel, each striving to lift his voice above the roaring ocean; and there was every appearance of a general



and inextricable confusion; but the same authority which had aroused them, thus unexpectedly, into activity, produced order, from their ill-directed though vigorous efforts.

Wilder had spoken, to awaken the drowsy, and to excite the torpid. The instant he found each man on the alert, he resumed his orders, with a calmness that gave a direction to the powers of all, but still with an energy that he well knew was called for by the occasion. The enormous sheets of duck, which had looked like so many light clouds in the murky and threatening heavens, were soon seen fluttering wildly, as they descended from their high places; and, in a few minutes, the ship was reduced to the action of her more secure and heavier canvas. To effect this object, every man in the ship had exerted his powers to the utmost, under the guidance of the steady but rapid mandates of their Commander. Then followed a short and apprehensive breathing pause. Every eye was turned towards the quarter where the ominous signs had been discovered; and each individual endeavoured to read their import, with an intelligence correspondent to the degree of skill he might have acquired, during his particular period of service, on that treacherous element which was now his home.

The dim tracery of the stranger's form had been swallowed by the flood of misty light, which, by this time, rolled along the sea like drifting vapour, semi-pellucid, preternatural, and seemingly tangible. The ocean itself appeared admonished that a quick and violent change was nigh. The waves had ceased to break in their former foaming and brilliant crests, but black masses of the water were seen lifting their surly summits against the eastern horizon, no longer relieved by their scintillating brightness, or shedding their own peculiar and lucid atmosphere around them. The breeze which had been so fresh, and



which had even blown, at times, with a force that nearly amounted to a little gale, was lulling and becoming uncertain, as though awed by the more violent power that was gathering along the borders of the sea, in the direction of the neighbouring continent. Each moment, the eastern puffs of air lost their strength, and became more and more feeble, until, in an incredibly short period, the heavy sails were heard flapping against the masts—a frightful and ominous calm succeeding. At this instant, a glancing, flashing gleam lighted the fearful obscurity of the ocean; and a roar, like that of a sudden burst of thunder, bellowed along the waters. The seamen turned their startled looks on each other, and stood stupid, as though a warning had been given, from the heavens themselves, of what was to follow. But their calm and more sagacious Commander put a different construction on the signal. His lip curled, in high professional pride, and his mouth moved rapidly, while he muttered to himself, with a species of scorn,—

“Does he think we sleep? Ay, he has got it himself, and would open our eyes to what is coming! What does he imagine we have been about, since the middle watch was set?”

Then, Wilder made a swift turn or two on the quarter-deck, never ceasing to bend his quick glances from one quarter of the heavens to another; from the black and lulling water on which his vessel was rolling, to the sails; and from his silent and profoundly expectant crew, to the dim lines of spars that were waving above his head, like so many pencils tracing their curvilinear and wanton images over the murky volumes of the superincumbent clouds.

“Lay the after-yards square!” he said, in a voice which was heard by every man on deck, though his words were apparently spoken but little above his breath. Even the creaking of the blocks, as the



spars came slowly and heavily round to the indicated position, contributed to the imposing character of the moment, and sounded, in the ears of all the instructed listeners, like notes of fearful preparation.

“Haul up the courses!” resumed Wilder, after a thoughtful, brief interval, with the same eloquent calmness of manner. Then, taking another glance at the threatening horizon, he added, with emphasis, “Furl them—furl them both: Away aloft, and hand your courses,” he continued, in a shout; “roll them up, cheerily; in with them, boys, cheerily; in!”

The conscious seamen took their impulses from the tones of their Commander. In a moment, twenty dark forms were seen leaping up the rigging, with the alacrity of so many quadrupeds; and, in another minute, the vast and powerful sheets of canvas were effectually rendered harmless, by securing them in tight rolls to their respective spars. The men descended as swiftly as they had mounted to the yards; and then succeeded another short and breathing pause. At this moment, a candle would have sent its flame perpendicularly towards the heavens. The ship, missing the steadying power of the wind, rolled heavily in the troughs of the seas, which, however, began to be more diminutive, at each instant; as though the startled element was recalling, into the security of its own vast bosom, that portion of its particles which had, just before, been permitted to gambol so madly over its surface. The water washed sullenly along the side of the ship, or, as she labouring rose from one of her frequent falls into the hollows of the waves, it shot back into the ocean from her decks, in numberless little glittering cascades. Every hue of the heavens, every sound of the element, and each dusky and anxious countenance that was visible, helped to proclaim the intense interest of the moment. It was in this brief interval



of expectation, and inactivity, that the mates again approached their Commander.

"It is an awful night, Captain Wilder!" said Earing, presuming on his rank to be the first of the two to speak.

"I have known far less notice given of a shift of wind," was the steady answer.

"We have had time to gather in our kites, 'tis true, sir; but there are signs and warnings, that come with this change, at which the oldest seaman has reason to take heed!"

"Yes," continued Nighthead, in a voice that sounded hoarse and powerful, even amid the fearful accessories of that scene; "yes, it is no trifling commission that can call people, that I shall not name, out upon the water in such a night as this. It was in just such weather that I saw the 'Vesuvius' ketch go to a place so deep, that her own mortar would not have been able to have sent a bomb into the open air, had hands and fire been there fit to let it off!"

"Ay; and it was in such a time that the Greenlandman was cast upon the Orkneys, in as flat a calm as ever lay on the sea."

"Gentlemen," said Wilder, with a peculiar and perhaps an ironical emphasis on the word, "what is it you would have? There is not a breath of air stirring, and the ship is naked to her topsails!"

It would have been difficult for either of the two malcontents to have given a very satisfactory answer to this question. Both were secretly goaded by mysterious and superstitious apprehensions, that were powerfully aided by the more real and intelligible aspect of the night; but neither had so far forgotten his manhood, and his professional pride, as to lay bare the full extent of his own weakness, at a moment when he was liable to be called upon for



the exhibition of qualities of a far more positive and determined character. Still, the feeling that was uppermost betrayed itself in the reply of Earing, though in an indirect and covert manner.

"Yes, the vessel is snug enough now," he said, "though eye-sight has shown us all it is no easy matter to drive a freighted ship though the water as fast as one of your flying craft can go, aboard of which no man can say, who stands at the helm, by what compass she steers, or what is her draught!"

"Ay," resumed Nighthead, "I call the 'Caroline' fast for an honest trader, and few square-rigged boats are there, who do not wear the pennants of the King, that can eat her out of the wind, or bring her into their wake, with studding-sails abroad. But this is a time, and an hour, to make a seaman think. Look at yon hazy light, here, in with the land, that is coming so fast down upon us, and then tell me whether it comes from the coast of America, or whether it comes from out of the stranger who has been so long running under our lee, but who has got, or is fast getting, the wind of us at last, and yet none here can say how, or why. I have just this much, and no more, to say: Give me for consort a craft whose Captain I know, or give me none!"

"Such is your taste, Mr Nighthead," said Wilder, coldly; "mine may, by some accident, be very different."

"Yes, yes," observed the more cautious and prudent Earing, "in time of war, and with letters of marque aboard, a man may honestly hope the sail he sees should have a stranger for her master; or otherwise he would never fall in with an enemy. But, though an Englishman born myself, I should rather give the ship in that mist a clear sea, seeing that I neither know her nation nor her cruise. Ah, Captain Wilder, yonder is an awful sight for the morning watch! Often, and often, have I seen the sun



rise in the east, and no harm done ; but little good can come of a day when the light first breaks in the west. Cheerfully would I give the owners the last month's pay, hard as I have earned it with my toil. did I but know under what flag yonder stranger sails."

"Frenchman, Don, or Devil, yonder he comes!" cried Wilder. Then, turning towards the silent and attentive crew, he shouted, in a voice that was appalling by its vehemence and warning, "Let run the after halyards! round with the fore-yard! round with it, men, with a will!"

These were cries that the startled crew perfectly understood. Every nerve and muscle were exerted to execute the orders, in time to be in readiness for the approaching tempest. No man spoke; but each expended the utmost of his power and skill in direct and manly efforts. Nor was there, in verity, a moment to lose, or a particle of human strength expended here, without a sufficient object.

The lucid and fearful-looking mist, which, for the last quarter of an hour, had been gathering in the north-west, was now driving down upon them with the speed of a race-horse. The air had already lost the damp and peculiar feeling of an easterly breeze; and little eddies were beginning to flutter among the masts—precursors of the coming squall. Then, a rushing, roaring sound was heard moaning along the ocean, whose surface was first dimpled, next ruffled, and finally covered, with one sheet of clear, white, and spotless foam. At the next moment, the power of the wind fell full upon the inert and labouring Bristol trader.

As the gust approached, Wilder had seized the slight opportunity, afforded by the changeful puffs of air, to get the ship as much as possible before the wind; but the sluggish movement of the vessel met neither the wishes of his own impatience nor the exi-



gencies of the moment. Her bows had slowly and heavily fallen off from the north, leaving her precisely in a situation to receive the first shock on her broadside. Happy it was, for all who had life at risk in that defenceless vessel, that she was not fated to receive the whole weight of the tempest at a blow. The sails fluttered and trembled on their massive yards, bellying and collapsing alternately for a minute, and then the rushing wind swept over them in a hurricane.

The "Caroline" received the blast like a stout and buoyant ship, yielding readily to its impulse, until her side lay nearly incumbent on the element in which she floated; and then, as if the fearful fabric were conscious of its jeopardy, it seemed to lift its reclining masts again, struggling to work its way heavily through the water.

"Keep the helm a-weather! Jam it a-weather, for your life!" shouted Wilder, amid the roar of the gust.

The veteran seaman at the wheel obeyed the order with steadiness, but in vain he kept his eyes riveted on the margin of his head sail, in order to watch the manner the ship would obey its power. Twice more, in as many moments, the tall masts fell towards the horizon, waving as often gracefully upward, and then they yielded to the mighty pressure of the wind, until the whole machine lay prostrate on the water.

"Reflect!" said Wilder, seizing the bewildered Earing by the arm, as the latter rushed madly up the steep of the deck; "it is our duty to be calm: Bring hither an axe."

Quick as the thought which gave the order, the admonished mate complied, jumping into the mizzen-channels of the ship, to execute, with his own hands, the mandate that he well knew must follow.

"Shall I cut?" he demanded, with uplifted arms,



and in a voice that atoned for his momentary confusion, by its steadiness and force.

"Hold! Does the ship mind her helm at all?"

"Not an inch, sir."

"Then cut," Wilder clearly and calmly added.

A single blow sufficed for the discharge of the momentary act. Extended to the utmost powers of endurance, by the vast weight it upheld, the lanyard struck by Earing no sooner parted, than each of its fellows snapped in succession, leaving the mast dependant on itself alone for the support of all its ponderous and complicated hamper. The cracking of the wood came next; and then the rigging fell, like a tree that had been sapped at its foundation, the little distance that still existed between it and the sea.

"Does she fall off?" instantly called Wilder to the observant seaman at the wheel.

"She yielded a little, sir; but this new squall is bringing her up again."

"Shall I cut?" shouted Earing from the main rigging, whither he had leaped, like a tiger who had bounded on his prey.

"Cut!" was the answer.

A loud and imposing crash soon succeeded this order, though not before several heavy blows had been struck into the massive mast itself. As before, the seas received the tumbling maze of spars, rigging, and sails; the vessel surging, at the same instant, from its recumbent position, and rolling far and heavily to windward.

"She rights! she rights!" exclaimed twenty voices, which had been hitherto mute, in a suspense that involved life and death.

"Keep her dead away!" added the still calm but deeply authoritative voice of the young Commander. "Stand by to furl the fore-topsail—let it hang a moment to drag the ship clear of the wreck—cut,



cut—cheerily, men—hatchets and knives—cut *with* all, and cut *off* all!”

As the men now worked with the freshened vigour of revived hope, the ropes that still confined the fallen spars to the vessel were quickly severed; and the “Caroline,” by this time dead before the gale, appeared barely to touch the foam that covered the sea, like a bird that was swift upon the wing skimming the waters. The wind came over the waste in gusts that rumbled like distant thunder, and with a power that seemed to threaten to lift the ship and its contents from its proper element, to deliver it to one still more variable and treacherous. As a prudent and sagacious seaman had let fly the halyards of the solitary sail that remained, at the moment when the squall approached, the loosened but lowered topsail was now distended in a manner that threatened to drag after it the only mast which still stood. Wilder instantly saw the necessity of getting rid of this sail, and he also saw the utter impossibility of securing it. Calling Earing to his side, he pointed out the danger, and gave the necessary order.

“Yon spar cannot stand such shocks much longer,” he concluded; “and, should it go over the bows, some fatal blow might be given to the ship at the rate she is moving. A man or two must be sent aloft to cut the sail from the yards.”

“The stick is bending like a willow whip,” returned the mate, “and the lower mast itself is sprung. There would be great danger in trusting a life in that top, while such wild squalls as these are breathing around us.”

“You may be right,” returned Wilder, with a sudden conviction of the truth of what the other had said: “Stay you then here; and, if any thing befall me, try to get the vessel into port as far north as the Capes of Virginia, at least;—on no account attempt Hatteras, in the present condition of”——



"What would you do, Captain Wilder?" interrupted the mate, laying his hand powerfully on the shoulder of his Commander, who, he observed, had already thrown his sea-cap on the deck, and was preparing to divest himself of some of his outer garments.

"I go aloft, to ease the mast of that topsail, without which we lose the spar, and possibly the ship."

"Ay, ay, I see that plain enough; but, shall it be said, Another did the duty of Edward Earing? It is your business to carry the vessel into the Capes of Virginia, and mine to cut the topsail adrift. If harm comes to me, why, put it in the log, with a word or two about the manner in which I played my part: That is always the best and most proper epitaph for a sailor."

Wilder made no resistance, but resumed his watchful and reflecting attitude, with the simplicity of one who had been too long trained to the discharge of certain obligations himself, to manifest surprise that another should acknowledge their imperative character. In the mean time, Earing proceeded steadily to perform what he had just promised. Passing into the waist of the ship, he provided himself with a suitable hatchet, and then, without speaking a syllable to any of the mute but attentive seamen, he sprang into the fore-rigging, every strand and rope-yarn of which was tightened by the strain nearly to snapping. The understanding eyes of his observers comprehended his intention; and, with precisely the same pride of station as had urged him to the dangerous undertaking, four or five of the older mariners jumped upon the ratlings, to mount with him into an air that apparently teemed with a hundred hurricanes.

"Lie down out of that fore-rigging," shouted Wilder, through a deck-trumpet; "lie down; all, but the mate, lie down!" His words were borne past



the inattentive ears of the excited and mortified followers of Earing, but they failed of their effect. Each man was too much bent on his own earnest purpose to listen to the sounds of recall. In less than a minute, the whole were scattered along the yards, prepared to obey the signal of their officer. The mate cast a look about him; and, perceiving that the time was comparatively favourable, he struck a blow upon the large rope that confined one of the angles of the distended and bursting sail to the lower yard. The effect was much the same as would be produced by knocking away the key-stone of an ill-cemented arch. The canvas broke from all its fastenings with a loud explosion, and, for an instant, was seen sailing in the air ahead of the ship, as though sustained on the wings of an eagle. The vessel rose on a sluggish wave—the lingering remains of the former breeze—and then settled heavily over the rolling surge, borne down alike by its own weight and the renewed violence of the gusts. At this critical instant, while the seamen aloft were still gazing in the direction in which the little cloud of canvas had disappeared, a lanyard of the lower rigging parted with a crack that even reached the ears of Wilder.

“Lie down!” he shouted fearfully through his trumpet; “down by the backstays; down for your lives; every man of you, down!”

A solitary individual, of them all, profited by the warning, and was seen gliding towards the deck with the velocity of the wind. But rope parted after rope, and the fatal snapping of the wood instantly followed. For a moment, the towering maze tottered, and seemed to wave towards every quarter of the heavens; and then, yielding to the movements of the hull, the whole fell, with a heavy crash, into the sea. Each cord, lanyard, or stay snapped, when it received the strain of its new position, as though it had been made of thread, leaving the naked and



despoiled hull of the "Caroline" to drive onward before the tempest, as if nothing had occurred to impede its progress.

A mute and eloquent pause succeeded this disaster. It appeared as if the elements themselves were appeased by their work, and something like a momentary lull in the awful rushing of the winds might have been fancied. Wilder sprang to the side of the vessel, and distinctly beheld the victims, who still clung to their frail support. He even saw Earing waving his hand, in adieu, with a seaman's heart, and like a man who not only felt how desperate was his situation, but one who knew how to meet his fate with resignation. Then the wreck of spars, with all who clung to it, was swallowed up in the body of the frightful, preternatural-looking mist which extended on every side of them, from the ocean to the clouds.

"Stand by, to clear away a boat!" shouted Wilder, without pausing to think of the impossibility of one's swimming, or of effecting the least good, in so violent a tornado.

But the amazed and confounded seamen who remained needed not instruction in this matter. No man moved, nor was the smallest symptom of obedience given. The mariners looked wildly around them, each endeavouring to trace, in the dusky countenance of the other, his opinion of the extent of the evil; but not a mouth was opened among them all.

"It is too late—it is too late!" murmured Wilder to himself; "human skill and human efforts could not save them!"

"Sail, ho!" Nighthead muttered at his elbow, in a voice that teemed with a species of superstitious awe.

"Let him come on," returned his young Commander, bitterly; "the mischief is ready finished to his hands!"



“Should you be a mortal ship, it is our duty to the owners and the passengers to speak her, if a man can make his voice heard in this tempest,” the second mate continued, pointing, through the haze, at the dim object that was certainly at hand.

“Speak her!—passengers!” muttered Wilder, involuntarily repeating his words. “No; any thing is better than speaking her. Do you see the vessel that is driving down upon us so fast?” he sternly demanded of the watchful seaman who still clung to the wheel of the “Caroline.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” was the brief, professional reply.

“Give her a birth—sheer away hard to port—perhaps he may pass us in the gloom, now we are no higher than our decks. Give the ship a broad sheer, I say, sir.”

The same laconic answer as before was given; and, for a few moments, the Bristol trader was seen diverging a little from the line in which the other approached; but a second glance assured Wilder that the attempt was useless. The strange ship (and every man on board felt certain it was the same that had so long been seen hanging in the north-western horizon) came on, through the mist, with a swiftness that nearly equalled the velocity of the tempestuous winds themselves. Not a thread of canvas was seen on board her. Each line of spars, even to the tapering and delicate top-gallant-masts, was in its place, preserving the beauty and symmetry of the whole fabric; but nowhere was the smallest fragment of a sail opened to the gale. Under her bows rolled a volume of foam, that was even discernible amid the universal agitation of the ocean; and, as she came within sound, the sullen roar of the water might have been likened to the noise of a cascade. At first, the spectators on the decks of the “Caroline” believed they were not seen, and some of the men



called madly for lights, in order that the disasters of the night might not terminate in the dreaded encounter.

"No!" exclaimed Wilder; "too many see us there already!"

"No, no," muttered Nighthead; "no fear but we are seen; and by such eyes, too, as never yet looked out of mortal head!"

The seamen paused. In another instant, the long-seen and mysterious ship was within a hundred feet of them. The very power of that wind, which was wont usually to raise the billows, now pressed the element, with the weight of mountains, into its bed. The sea was every where a sheet of froth, but no water swelled above the level of the surface. The instant a wave lifted itself from the security of the vast depths, the fluid was borne away before the tornado in driving, glittering spray. Along this frothy but comparatively motionless surface, then, the stranger came booming, with the steadiness and grandeur with which a dark cloud is seen to sail before the hurricane. No sign of life was any where discovered about her. If men looked out, from their secret places, upon the straitened and discomfited wreck of the Bristol trader, it was covertly, and as darkly as the tempest before which they drove. Wilder held his breath, for the moment the stranger drew nighest, in the very excess of suspense; but, as he saw no signal of recognition, no human form, nor any intention to arrest, if possible, the furious career of the other, a smile of exultation gleamed across his countenance, and his lips moved rapidly, as though he found pleasure in being abandoned to his distress. The stranger drove by, like a dark vision, and, ere another minute, her form was beginning to grow less distinct, in a thickening body of the spray to leeward.



"She is going out of sight in the mist!" exclaimed Wilder, when he drew his breath, after the fearful suspense of the few last moments.

"Ay, in mist, or clouds," responded Nighthead, who now kept obstinately at his elbow, watching, with the most jealous distrust, the smallest movement of his unknown Commander.

"In the heavens, or in the sea, I care not, provided she be gone."

"Most seamen would rejoice to see a strange sail, from the hull of a vessel shaved to the deck like this."

"Men often court their destruction, from ignorance of their own interests. Let him drive on, say I, and pray I! He goes four feet to our one; and now I ask no better favour than that this hurricane may blow until the sun shall rise."

Nighthead started, and cast an oblique glance, which resembled denunciation, at his companion. To his blunted faculties, and superstitious mind, there was profanity in thus invoking the tempest, at a moment when the winds seemed already to be pouring out their utmost wrath.

"This is a heavy squall, I will allow," he said, "and such an one as many mariners pass whole lives without seeing; but he knows little of the sea who thinks there is not more wind where this comes from."

"Let it blow!" cried the other, striking his hands together a little wildly; "I pray only for wind!"

All the doubts of Nighthead, as to the character of the young stranger who had so unaccountably got possession of the office of Nicholas Nichols, if, indeed, any remained, were now removed. He walked forward among the silent and thoughtful crew, with the air of a man whose opinion was settled. Wilder, however, paid no attention to the move-



ments of his subordinate, but continued pacing the deck for hours ; now casting his eyes at the heavens, or now sending frequent and anxious glances around the limited horizon, while the "Royal Caroline" still continued drifting before the wind, a shorn and naked wreck.

END OF VOLUME I.

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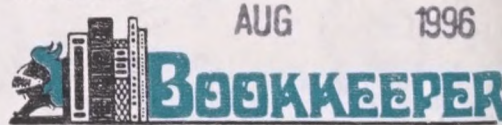




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Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide  
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